

1855

THOUGHTS

ON

INTERCOURSE WITH SPIRITS,

SUGGESTED BY

A recent Sermon of the Vicar of Caling

ON THE

NATURE AND CONDITION OF SPIRITS.

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ERRATA.

- p. 21, last line but one, for *three* read *two*.
p. 22, first line, for *those of Moses and Elias*, read *that of Moses*.



INTERCOURSE WITH SPIRITS.

AT the conclusion of the Sermon which we are now about to consider, it is very judiciously observed that the present is not a "question of faith as to the reality of what is professed and pretended." "The question is not is it real or is it imposture? The great question for the Christian is, Is it right or is it wrong? Let God's Word decide." We propose accordingly, in examining the subject, to pursue the course here pointed out, and not to enter into the question of the reality or unreality of the alleged Spirit-manifestations; we shall not enter into the question whether they proceed from spirits or not, or whether those who act as the mediums of these manifestations act rightly or wrongly in so doing: particularly as the object of the Sermon is, very discreetly, not so much to pronounce of itself a judgment, as to furnish principles from the Word of God by which to enable others to do so. It is with these principles that we are at present concerned; and hence it is only the *theology* of the subject of which we treat: our object being at present respectfully to shew, that however wrong may be

the alleged Spirit-manifestations, the teaching of the Sermon cannot be right.

Before however adverting to this subject, it is desirable to draw the attention of the reader, in a few words, to what has been said by Divines on the subject of *The Latter Days* : for this is a most important element in a question of this nature, as it has prepared the minds of many to expect extraordinary events of some kind or other, and even predisposed them to give their assent in cases in which otherwise they might not have done so.

The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 26 ; referring to the voice of God speaking from the holy mount, thus observes, "*Whose voice then shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*" On these words a well-known Commentator* of the Church of England remarks, that "the words are highly figurative and must be understood as predictive of that *total alteration and thorough reformation in religion* by the promulgation of the Gospel, which was also brought to pass in that very age." Another Commentator† says, that "it cannot signify the removal and subversion of the *material heavens*

* Bloomfield.

† Whitby.

and earth, they being not thus shaken at Christ's coming," but that it signifies "the abolition of the Jewish covenant, and the substitution of a *new* and Christian covenant and dispensation." Another* says, that it signifies "the alterations made in the constitution of religion;" another,† that God would *unhinge the whole civil and ecclesiastical state* of the Jews and abolish the Mosaic dispensation in order to make way for the kingdom of Christ: that the expression *once more* refers to *the change in the state of the church and the world*, which took place by the introduction of the Mosaic dispensation; to the extraordinary events attending that change; and to all other subsequent convulsions of the nation; and that it looks forward to the still more *extraordinary changes to be introduced at the coming of the Messiah*, denoting the total removal of the things shaken, as of things that are made and constituted, after the manner of this lower creation, to endure but for a time. Some there are who interpret "*the things that are made*" to signify things appointed for a season; such as, in general, those of the Jewish dispensation; others interpret them as signifying *made by men*, in which case the expression includes also figments of all kinds, such as those traditions of the Jews which made the commandments of God of none effect, as also in general, their false philosophy, fabulous histories, and cor-

* Slade.

† Scott.

rupt interpretations of Scripture. Accordingly a modern Commentator* observes upon this subject: "In general it may be remarked, that the effect of Christianity is to give stability to all that is founded on truth, and to drive error from the world. Christ came that he might destroy all the systems of error; that is, all that could be shaken on earth, and to confirm all that is true."

We thus see what the *shaking of heaven and earth* is generally interpreted to signify; and having thus seen the general *interpretation*, the next question is, what is the *application*? or, in other words, to what period or periods does it *apply*? That the passage applies to the Jewish dispensation we have already seen; but does it apply to that Christian dispensation which now is? Let us hear the church upon this subject. The following are the words of a celebrated Commentator:† "Chrysostom, nay, all the Greeks without exception explain this passage as referring to that *shaking of heaven and earth*, which is to take place at the *end of the age*, and at the *Second Advent* of the Lord, when the whole world will be renovated. For Cyril also, according to Œcumenius, declares this in plain terms to be the meaning of the passage. To these may be added the Latin writers, such as Anselm, St. Thomas, Cajetan, and others." Now to all these may further be added a cloud of

* Barnes.

† Estius.

writers who have written upon this subject since the foregoing.

And here it may be observed, that although our Lord did not point out the *times* when these things were to be, yet he pointed out the *signs of the times*, and commanded all mankind to be upon the watch. One of these signs was that the *powers of heaven* should be *shaken*; an expression which accords with that of the prophet Haggai as quoted by the apostle, and which indicates that the change or commotion which should take place upon *earth*, would be attended by some corresponding commotion or change in the order of things in *heaven*, whatever may be understood by this term.

Now, whether rightly or wrongly we say not, but it is certain that a great many of all denominations in Christendom firmly believe and stedfastly maintain (as may be seen from their publications) that *these are the latter days*; and if we are commanded diligently to observe "the signs of the times," there are none more remarkable than the alleged modern Spirit-manifestations. We moreover willingly add that, in trying the Spirits whether they be of God, no method could be more Scriptural, more prudent, or in accordance with the requirements of pastoral duty, than that of having recourse "*to the law and to the testimony*;" and it is only because we humbly opine that the law and the testimony have not spoken upon

the occasion, that we venture to address to the reader the following remarks.

The Sermon rightly observes that Scripture informs us of three orders of spiritual beings, *angels*, *devils*, and the *spirits* or *souls of the departed*; corresponding to the three regions respectively assigned to them, *Heaven*, *Hell*, and *Hades*.

First with respect to the angels of heaven.

Nothing is said in Scripture concerning their origin; and accordingly a very prudent silence has been observed in the Sermon upon this subject. Although however Scripture has been silent, tradition has spoken. It has told us that these angels were originally created by God in a perfect state, and that the place of their abode was heaven. This is a very common notion; but as it is requisite upon the present occasion to abide by *the law and the testimony*, no genuine Christian is bound to believe it. For any thing that is said in Scripture to the contrary, he may believe that all angels have once been men, and that when "the morning stars sang together" at the creation of this world, if by these morning stars *angels* be signified, these angels may have been spirits from other worlds, living in the presence of God, and beatified myriads of ages, it may be, before this world was created or inhabited. This we mention, because it bears upon the subject of intercourse with men, whether on this earth or on other earths in the

universe. At all events, if any one believes in the existence of angelic beings who were never inhabitants of any earth in the universe, but were created originally in heaven, let him maintain his belief; but remember at the same time that it is founded, not upon *the law and the testimony*, but upon *tradition*.

Thus much concerning angels in heaven; we next proceed to the consideration of those spiritual beings who are denominated *devils*, and are the inhabitants of hell.

On this subject the Sermon observes, p. 6;—

“But besides these good spirits of heaven, the Bible shews us that there are also other spirits in existence which are evil and wicked spirits. Concerning them we learn, that they were once of the same nature as the heavenly spirits, sons of God equally with them: that their dwelling also was in the happiness of heaven; but that they sinned against God their Creator, and by Him were cast out. For so it is written, ‘God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.’ What their sin was we are but imperfectly informed, but many intimations seem to shew that it was pride.”

For the *only* evidence upon which this statement is founded, we are referred to 2 Peter ii. 4, and to Jude 6. It is universally admitted that Peter and Jude are here referring to one and the same thing.

The words of Peter are as follow (ver. 4); "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," &c.—The words of Jude are the following (v. 6, 14, 15); "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." . . . "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.'"

Such then are the statements of Peter and Jude; both as referring to the same thing—being derived from the *prophecy of Enoch*. Now on this subject what is the remark made by some of the most highly reputed commentators? The following is a note of Dr. Doddridge;—

"A precious fragment of *antediluvian history* is here preserved to us, as it seems by the special providence of God, who taught the apostle Jude to distinguish between what was genuine and spurious in the tradition. It can by no means be proved that this is a *quotation* from that foolish book, called *Enoch's prophecy*, as Bishop Sherlock has very rightly

urged ; nor would it prove the *inspiration* of the book from whence it was taken, but only the truth of this *particular* passage."

It cannot be proved that it is a quotation from that "*foolish book*" called Enoch's prophecy ! Then can it be proved that it was not ; especially as it is expressly said that "*Enoch prophesied of these, saying,*" &c. Had it not been found out that the book of Enoch was a very foolish book, would any one have dreamed but that Jude was either quoting from Enoch or giving the substance of what he said ? It must however be owned that commentators *in general*, candidly acknowledge that Jude *was* quoting from Enoch. "The traditional prophecy," says Pyle in his *Paraphrase*, "the Jews have of Enoch concerning the destruction of the old world, may as fitly be applied to these men." According to which version Jude is represented as quoting a prophecy of Enoch preserved among other Jewish traditions ; and Dr. Benson candidly owns, that "the form of expression used, is an argument that these words were taken out of some book to which the apostle here refers, and that he cites the words in the manner in which they were there delivered." Still it is no wonder that there should be great reluctance in acknowledging the quotation, as may be deduced from the following observations on the passage. Bloomfield for instance has the following note ;—

“Hanlein thinks the story derived from the Apocryphal books, and Jewish mythology; and neither confirmed, nor rejected by the apostle, who only makes use of the circumstances of the story as examples to shew the Jews the miserable consequences of error and vice. But to this I must demur, as there is something unsound in the principle. And I shall here adduce the words of a profounder theologian and an abler scholar, (Laurm. ad h. 1. p. 49,) ‘I see no reason for admitting this to be a myth; I am of opinion it is a veritable history, to us entirely unknown. For this reason the great obscurity attending the passage cannot be dissipated on account of our want of knowledge concerning a history of so ancient a date.’ He refers to C. Olear. *Diss. de angelis desertoribus et captivis*, ap. Thes. Nov. P. 2. p. 1008.”

Bishop Sherlock says (*Dissertations on Prophecy*, p. 214);—

“It is no wonder that some antient Christians, who took it for granted that St. Jude quoted the same book, which they had under the name of *Enoch*, made it an objection against the authority of this epistle. For this book *Enoch* was a mere romance, and full of the idle inventions of some hellenistic Jew. But then, there is not the least evidence that this spurious book was extant, in the days of the apostles; nor, indeed, any kind of proof that St. Jude quotes a book, called *Enoch*. It is more likely that he quoted some antient

book, containing the traditions of the Jewish church, which has been long since lost; and probably contained many things relating to other antient patriarchs and prophets, as well as to Enoch. The loss of which was miserably supplied, by forging books under the names of the patriarchs. To this we owe the life of Adam, the book of Seth, the Testaments of the Patriarchs,—which were spread abroad in very early days of the church. What the true ancient book was, which St. Jude quoted, by whom penned, or what authority it had in the Jewish church, no mortal can tell: this only we know it was not among their canonical books.”

No doubt it was with a commendable intention that the Bishop desired to disconnect as much as possible the epistle of Jude from the prophecy of Enoch; a “*foolish*” prophecy, says Dr. Doddridge: “*a mere romance*,” says Bishop Sherlock; a prophecy from an Apocryphal book say Dr. Adam Clarke and the Archbishop of Cashel. Since, however, the time that Bishop Sherlock wrote, the book has been discovered, translated, and published with the following title-page, “*The Book of Enoch the Prophet: an Apocryphal production, supposed for ages to have been lost; but discovered at the close of the last century in Abyssinia; now first translated from an Ethiopic MS. in the Bodleian Library.* By Richard Laurence,

LL.D., Archbishop of Cashel, late Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford. Second Edition, corrected and enlarged." Now the second chapter of this work contains the very passage quoted by Jude, v. 14, and shews us clearly, as the Archbishop of Cashel the translator admits, that Jude was actually making a genuine quotation from this Jewish tradition; for the words of Enoch are, "Behold he comes with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon them, and destroy the wicked, and reprove all the carnal for everything which the sinful and ungodly have done, and committed against him." Regarded as a traditional prophecy, there is nothing to which any Christian can so far object; for so far it is doubtless in agreement with the Word of God; so far nothing is said concerning the *fall of the angels* from their first estate. In the sequel, however, the *prophecy* proceeds to enlarge upon this topic; to tell us how the angels, the sons of heaven, became enamoured of the daughters of men, whom they married, and from whom arose giants; that these angels were two hundred in number, who descended upon Ardis, the top of Mount Armon; that their chiefs were eighteen in number, whose names were Urakabameel, Akibeel, Tamiel, Ramuel, Danel, Azkeel and others, of all whom Samyaza was the leader; how these angels, having left their first estate in consequence of coming

down to the earth and marrying the daughters of mortal men, were sentenced, in these words, *addressed to the angel Michael*, to eternal perdition ; p. 10 ;—

“ To Michael likewise the Lord said ; Go and announce his (*Azazyel's*) crime to Samyaza, and to the others who are with him, who have been associated with women that they might be polluted with all their impurity. And when all their sons shall be slain, when they shall see the perdition of their beloved, bind them for seventy generations underneath the earth, even to the day of judgment, and of consummation, until the judgment, the effect of which will last for ever, be completed.

“ Then shall they be taken away into the lowest depths of the fire in torments ; and in confinement shall they be shut up for ever.

“ Immediately after this shall he, together with them, burn and perish ; they shall be bound until the consummation of many generations.”

Now this is admitted to be the passage alluded to by Peter and Jude ; to which alone we are referred in the Sermon as authorities for the existence of fallen angels. Not that there is any omission by the Sermon in this respect ; for they happen to be the only authorities which are generally quoted. It is however to be observed, that Mr. Faber in his *Treatise on the Many Mansions* says, that “ there is *conclusive and incontrovertible proof*,” that the angels mentioned by

Jude cannot be fallen angels as commonly supposed ; but must be human beings ; and are no other than the race of *Apostate Sethites*. (See the whole of chap. vi., sec. 4.)

It is further to be noted, that the late Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (Dr. Lamb), in a work which he published upon the subject of *Hieroglyphics*, thus delivers his opinion concerning the tradition of the fall of the angels, p. 119 ;—

“There can be no doubt respecting the source whence it was obtained. The first notion of the existence of a fallen angel is found in the *Zendavesta*. The *Arihman* of *Zoroaster* is the original model of *Satan*. The later Jews became conversant with the Persian mythology, and introduced this with various other notions into their writings ; and it seems to have been adopted by the early Christians without any enquiry into the scriptural authority upon which it rested. Our immortal countryman *Milton*, by clothing this fiction of the Persian mythology in all the beauty and attraction of poetry, has so recommended it to our imagination, that we almost receive it as of divine authority ; and we feel a reluctance to be convinced that all his splendid fabric is based on falsehood.”

Now why have we entered upon this subject ? Because it bears directly upon that of the intercourse of spirits with this world ; for the Sermon divides the

orders of spiritual beings into three kinds,—the angels who retain their rectitude, the *fallen angels*, and the spirits of the departed. But if these fallen angels are mere apocryphal beings, of whom Satan as an individual angel is now considered the leader, then are their alleged employments apocryphal ; and if man is excited to evil, these are not the beings who do it, because no such beings exist, and we are obliged to fall back upon that interpretation which regards the terms *Devil, Satan, and Old Serpent*, as nouns of multitude ; a meaning which is admitted by Parkhurst, Bishop Heber, and others ; “the devil and his angels” signifying the diabolical crew and their emissaries ; and as the authority for supposing that these evil angels were originally created good and placed in heaven from which they afterwards fell, has been seen to be apocryphal, we have no other alternative but to regard evil angels as *departed spirits* who have originally come from some earth in the universe, and who have once been men.

We are quite aware that the tradition concerning the *fallen angels* and their leader is held by the generality of Christians as sacredly as any of the articles of their creed, though happily for them it is not one of them : it is a mere tradition : but the spirit of error will often survive the error itself, and even when the error of a tenet has long since been exploded, the habits of thinking superinduced by it will remain

for ages. But if traditions and figments are among the things which pass away when an *old* dispensation is dying out and a *new* one coming in, then must those who believe that these are *the latter days* believe also that the figment concerning the fall of the angels must be among those things which will certainly pass away, though not without an attempt to keep its ground—not without the minds of men being shaken, and their strong persuasions making a last struggle to preserve their existence.

One of the strange characteristics of the present day is this : that whereas in past times the subjects of discussion in the church have been the doctrines and discipline of the church ; so the subjects of discussion now are frequently the nature and condition of spirits, and the intercourse between the visible and invisible worlds ; men no longer professing to dive into these things as among “the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God,” but as belonging to those which God has at length revealed. This alone would render it necessary to look closely into the opinions which have hitherto been held upon this subject, to sift and examine them carefully and minutely, in order to meet the requirements of the age. We therefore proceed in the next place to consider what is said in the Sermon concerning the nature and condition of *departed souls*, or of spirits which have passed from the material body into *Hades*.

The general doctrine of the Sermon is that these spirits are locked up in Hades by Him who alone has the key; that, as such, they have no intercourse with the living in this world except upon special occasions; and that on these occasions the intercourse is as much a miraculous circumstance as would be the resurrection of a body from the grave. The question has arisen, says the Sermon, p. 12, "Have not the spirits of the dead power to come upon earth, and hold intercourse with the living they have left behind?" As the question stands, it involves some degree of ambiguity: for in reply it is argued that Christ, as having the keys of death and hell, has alone the power to permit or command them to appear, and that they have therefore no power of their own, nor has any one else any power of his own, to cause them to appear; consequently that none can appear except probably by some diabolical counterfeit. But this does not follow. Calmet has written two volumes concerning the spirits of the departed, and has professed to enumerate many instances of their appearance. How far those narratives are true or delusive, is not here the question; but he lays it down as a general rule, nevertheless, that none of them could appear without the permission or appointment of Him who has the keys of Hades; and if any spirits should appear renouncing that power, we may be assured of the source from whence they come.

We are not however obliged to consider the return to the earth of these spirits as altogether miraculous and confined to special occasions ; at least so far as the argument is founded upon Christ possessing the keys of Hades and of death ; for if this expression be interpreted as signifying that all departed spirits are imprisoned in Hades, and as such can hold no visible intercourse with mankind except by a miracle (an interpretation which we do not concede), yet to the church in Philadelphia it is said, "*Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no one can shut it.*" Certainly if *shutting the door* signifies to shut up the spirits in Hades, then *opening it* means to let them out ; and the church of Philadelphia will be in a state of free intercourse with the spirits of the departed.

The Sermon however refers to the parable concerning Abram and Lazarus in Luke, chap. xvi., and remarks that in Hades there are two distinct regions, one for the good and the other for the evil ; that "neither one nor the other can of himself or by any power of his own leave his appointed position : they cannot pass one to the other : they cannot revisit the earth they have left by any will or action of their own." Is not this a confusion of two different things ? Because the good and the evil cannot pass to each other from their respective stations in *Hades*, does it therefore follow that they cannot revisit *this earth* ? The parable says (v. 26), "*There is a great gulph*

fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." But does not this refer to the intercourse of spirits with each other in the invisible world? How then can it be an answer to the question whether the spirits of the dead have power to come upon earth and hold intercourse with the living? Is not this rather a subject reserved till the next verse? "*I pray thee therefore, father, to send him to my father's house,"* &c. In Hades itself the good and the evil cannot exchange places with each other: their states being opposite, the thing is impossible; but when the rich man prays that Lazarus might be sent to the earth, nothing is said of any impassable gulph of separation between the earth and Hades; it is affirmed only that such an intercourse for such a purpose would be inexpedient, useless, or even injurious, for that "*If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead."*

It may be replied, that whether such an intercourse be impossible or useless, the result is all the same; they are not allowed to come.

This point therefore we further proceed to consider.

The Sermon maintains that, as a historical fact, there are only three cases on record in the Holy Scripture in which spirits have been known to appear.

That of Samuel (1 Samuel xxviii. 7) and those of Moses and Elias at the transfiguration; and it is added, p. 17, "Beyond these cases there is no reliable evidence of any spirits of the dead having ever visited this earth: nor is it possible that they could have done so, except specially permitted by Almighty God."—We do not know why the following has been omitted, as recorded in Job iv. 13, the description of which is thus paraphrased by Bishop Patrick;—

"As I was ruminating one night, when all were asleep, of some visions which I had had; I was on a sudden seized with such a fear that it made every joint of my body tremble. Whereupon I saw a spirit pass by me, which made mine hair stand on end. I am not able to describe what it was like; for though it stood still and I saw an image of something, yet I can only tell what I heard in a still voice, saying, 'Can any one think that a miserable man is more righteous than God his Judge? Or that it is possible for any body to be more unprovable than He that made him?'"

But the book of Job, it may be said, is purely allegorical, and as such no reliance can be placed upon this narrative as one of historical fact; besides, it is only a single case. What then is said by commentators in general upon this subject? That the book of Job is a most ancient book, and that in the ancient times before the Scriptures were written the foregoing

was *the common method* by which God made known his will to mankind. This is admitted by Scott in his Annotations* on the passage we have been considering, as also on the one in Job xxxiii. 14; “*For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not; in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of man and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.*” Hence observes Bishop Law in his *Considerations of the Theory of Religion*; “Frequent communications then might be necessary, to keep up a tolerable sense of religion among men, and secure obedience to the divine institutes; and that the Almighty did not exhibit such manifestations of himself as were either necessary, or fit to answer this end, cannot be concluded from the silence of those very short accounts we have in sacred history, as was observed before.”—p. 65.

It may be said that these *immediate revelations* were common in ancient times, only because they had not then the written Word of God and there was then no other medium of communication of the divine will; but that now “*God who in sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken by his*

* See also the Annotations of Henry, Poole, and Mac-knight's Preface to the Epistle of Jude.

Son ;” and that we are therefore now to look in no other way for the revelation of the divine will to man.

But this does not follow ; for the question is, What is revealed to us by God in his Word? Has that Word said that there shall be no other dispensation after the Christian? nor ever again any further open intercourse between the visible and invisible worlds as in former times? Let us refer to the law and to the testimony: “*I, John, saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven*” (Rev. xxi.). Now there has always been a large portion of the church which believes that this prophecy refers to a *New Church* to be established upon earth in the last days, in which the paradisiacal state of open communion with heaven is to be restored ; and that it is this which is signified by the “*restitution of all things.*” The evidence of this it would be out of place here to adduce ; suffice it to state the fact, that intercourse between the visible and invisible worlds in the restored paradisiacal state is an event that is fully expected by a large class of divines in the present day, and that the orthodoxy of no divine would be impeached for such an opinion. The nature of that intercourse has been in some measure foreshadowed by the apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of what took place in his own times, he observes ; “*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeru-*

salem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to *the spirits of just men made perfect,*" &c. (Heb. xii. 22, 23).

In this passage is established the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, which is an article in the Apostles' Creed. With these saints the church is said even now to hold communion. Who then are meant by "*the spirits of just men made perfect?*" One commentator* observes that, "nearly all understand these words to signify the souls of pious men who have departed from the body, and who live with God:" another,† that the expression signifies their "separate souls," and that "the passage may be regarded as a very considerable confirmation of an intermediate state:" another,‡ that it means "the disembodied spirits of the righteous:" another,§ that it means "the company of ancient believers and of those who had died since the coming of Christ:" another,|| that it means "the souls of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, &c., who have departed this life before us and before the coming of Christ." Indeed, there is scarcely a single commentator who does not regard these "*spirits of the just*" as spirits in an *intermediate state*; not as locked

* Estius.

† Slade.

‡ Bloomfield.

§ Scott.

|| Cornelius a Lapide.

up, bolted, barred, and barricaded in Hades so as to be excluded from all intercourse with men on earth, but as being as much in a state of intercourse with men upon earth as other and angelic beings, whether good or evil. We see not therefore how it is possible to reconcile the Sermon with the catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints. For says Dr. Johnson, "*Communion* signifies *Intercourse*;" this is the very first meaning he gives to the word; and if these saints are in Hades, then the article of the church is, that there is intercourse even now between men on earth and spirits in Hades. To what extent that intercourse may exist, or what may be its nature, the church has nowhere defined. Hence speaking of intercourse with good and evil spirits, a modern writer observes; *—

“The intercommunion of the world of spirits with our own must needs be a most elevating, and ought to be a most consoling, belief. To have those whom we have best loved locally near us, to believe that we are assisted by them in dangers, to remember that they are witnesses of our temptations, and rejoicers in our victory, is one of the most encouraging and inspiring thoughts that a Christian man can possess. All the ideas, then, that have been raised in our minds, of holy thoughts suggested, unseen evils warded

* *Communications with the Unseen World*, p. 215. (Burns, Portman Street.)

off, space or time annihilated for the safety of one in peril, courage renovated, ways directed by the ministrations of spiritual beings ; all these things ought to fill our hearts with gratitude, when we express our belief in the communion of saints."

When therefore it is urged that it is said, "*If men believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead,*" and that this is a sufficient reason why spirits cannot be allowed to appear to any one, and why all narratives pretending to relate their appearance are to be discredited, the answer is, Not so: they are not, as a general rule, allowed to appear as external evidence to the unbeliever, any more than miracles are allowed to be wrought for that purpose; for a man is not necessarily reformed by witnessing the one or the other. But the case is altogether different as regards one who is already a believer; he neither seeks nor desires external evidence to convince him of that of which he is convinced already; he feels assured that as a member of the church he is already in intercourse with the spirits of the just; that the more he is like-minded with them, the more nearly is he conjoined with them; he seeks not open intercourse with them, at least *till God's good time*; for after all they may be yearning for the return of the Golden Age upon earth; they may mourn over the follies and gross darkness of the church in respect both to heaven and hell;

they may rejoice in the promise that the period shall come when heaven and earth shall be again united, when the mystery of God shall be finished, when the kingdom of God shall come and his will be done on earth as it is now done in heaven. How many good men have prayed for the return of such a state! But this is a very different case from that of Dives and his brethren: in the one case open intercourse with spirits is sought as a cause of belief, in the other it follows as a consequence.

There is one subject more to which, before concluding, we would draw the attention of our reader.

Spirits are spoken of in p. 9, as dwelling in the "boundless realms of *space*," and again in p. 11, it is said, "Where the exact *locality* of the abode of departed spirits is, no one can presume to say; there are many intimations in Scripture which seem to shew that it is in the *inner parts of the earth*."

Now time and fixed space are conditions of matter; locality is a relation of *space*; but spirits who have put off their material bodies, have together with these put off the conditions of time and space: their duration is not measured by time, nor has their situation any relation to locality in *space*. Thus in reference to mundane space, they have no *ubi*; they are neither above the sun, nor on the planets, nor in the air, nor inside the earth. Spirits are in their own spiritual world, which is in close proximity with us, just as

men in the material body are in their own material world. Nevertheless we are aware, that the belief is very common that *Hades* is a place *inside the earth*; indeed Bishop Horsley was of this opinion; he thought that "in the poetical parts of Scripture, it is represented as secured by gates of brass which our Lord is to batter down, and barricaded with huge massive iron bars which he is to cut asunder." Such are his words. The late Mr. Faber was of a similar opinion, and regarded it as a "place enclosed within an impassable fence"—"a central abyss"—"a central receptacle"—"a subterranean and submarine locality"—"a downward perpendicularity, as if a person should dive beyond the utmost limits of the sea in point of depth"—"an *inferum* beneath the surface of the earth so as to be *cavernously* within the earth." We mention this because it is stated in the Sermon also, that "there are many intimations in Scripture which seem to shew that the *locality* of departed spirits is in *the inner parts of the earth*." Such a doctrine is, we believe, perfectly consistent with orthodoxy, having been maintained long since by many of the fathers; but is it possible to speak of it without a smile? Dr. Burnett, in his treatise *On the State of the Dead*, vol. ii., chap. x., is amusingly indisposed to such a view of the subject. "If," says he, "there was any passage thereto, the water would gush in and extinguish the flames of hell!"—"if not, then there is

provided no pervious passage," and "the wicked will have almost an inaccessible place for their torments, and vast solid tracts of earth to perforate in their voyage! and how long, how tedious a journey will it be! the semidiameter of our earth is alone three thousand four hundred of our miles, an impenetrable distance alone; but where this deep passage and where begins the road to the *vast cavern*, is as yet unknown!" Of course one cannot in justice make any publication responsible for more than is contained in it, and yet if Hades be in the *inner parts of the earth*, thoughts like those of Dr. Burnett, can scarcely fail to be suggested, nor would there be anything irrational in Mr. Faber's notions concerning the last voyage of the raised dead and the living faithful into the air. Thus he observes, p. 389;—

"In the day of judgment, this material world will be burned up and resolved into its constituent particles by a fervent heat.

"So we learn from St. Peter. And, from St. Paul, we additionally learn: that both the raised dead in Christ, and the faithful who shall be alive at his coming, will be conjointly caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and shall thus escape the fearful mundane conflagration raging below or beneath them.

"Now, while this process of salvation is going on above, the process of everlasting destruction is simultaneously going on below.

“The shell of the earth, partly flies off in sublimation through the heated atmosphere, and partly falls a blazing mass into the central Hades. This last operation, which is the organizing of what we call hell, unites hell to Tartarus. It is not, that Tartarus ceases to exist, but that it locally and physically becomes one with hell. Death and Hades; that second death which is the ever-during penalty of unrepented sin, and that portion of Hades which St. Peter distinguishes by the name of Tartarus: death and Hades, we read, are both cast into the lake of fire.* A flaming torrent descends, and mingles with Tartarus, itself already a fiery lake where the disembodied souls of the wicked had long been writhing both in actual and in anticipative torment. Thus, on the mere physical principle of gravitation, a huge globe of fire would be formed out of the dense blazing materials which would all tend to the centre: and this would constitute the perfected hell, prepared, in the counsels

* “Rev. xx. 14. I (Mr. Faber) have said, ‘that portion of Hades which St. Peter distinguishes by the name of Tartarus,’ because we have no positive revelation as to what will become of that other portion of Hades, which our Lord denominated Paradise and Abraham’s bosom. Respecting the destiny of this better portion, there is, as I have observed, room for much plausible speculation: but, in strictness of speech, there is nothing more. Hints, possibly, there may be: but imagined hints are no hints; and, if any exist, they may easily be misunderstood and thence misinterpreted.”

of God, for the devil and his angels. Here also would be congregated the prior human dwellers in Tartarus, their souls now reunited to their bodies : and thus would be completed that horrid synagogue of Satan, condemned men and condemned angels.”

Why should not this revolting and fabulous interpretation be very satisfactory, if we believe that good angels live in the upper air ! and fallen angels in the lower atmosphere ! and departed spirits *in the inner parts of the earth !*

Suppose now we regard the whole question concerning the visible and invisible worlds as one into which we ought not to enter, and consequently as one of which we profess to be altogether ignorant ; in this case it is clear that our only alternative is between the foregoing opinions—and—nothing. Some divines may labor to vindicate this state of things, and, through fear of novelty, to shew that it both will and ought to be permanent ; and as long as the Christian world is undisturbed upon the subject, where all is dark, one opinion is as good as another. But let any cause arise to disturb such a state of things : let spirits appear, whether they be real or not, and the scene becomes changed ; the church is as much tried by the spirits as the spirits by the church. Hitherto it has been *heresy* with which the church has had to contend. In this case she claims, in virtue of a divine commission, to be in possession of true doc-

trine; in the case of Spirit-manifestations she can make no such claims, she has no such commission and has really nothing to say; all is unrevealed, all is dark, all is doubtful, all is conjecture. How can she enter into battle if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, especially if it should happen to give no sound at all. The church it is true may prove some spirits; or they may more effectually prove themselves, to be Anti-christian; while of others the church will have nothing to say, although they may have a great deal to say of the church. At all events if these Spirit-manifestations, whatever be their character (and it seems to be very mixed), shall rouse the Christian world to more serious thoughts upon the subject, and excite them to enquire after more definite, clear, and rational views in regard to the Divine Love, the Divine Providence, the Intermediate State, the nature of Heaven and Hell, and induce them to seek for *more spiritual interpretations* of the Word of God, they will at least (however evil in themselves), be so far not without producing some benefit to the church.

In the words of Dr. Burnett, at the close of his treatise on *The State of the Dead*, we bid the reader farewell;—

“We ought always to have before our eyes the progress of Providence, in illuminating and bringing the world to perfection, and to bend all our studies and endeavours that way; that what we have heard

with our ears, we may proclaim aloud. But the minds of some must be gradually brought to bear the strong rays of truth; too much light will offend their tender eyes; some cannot bear the objects directly, but take the images in by the intermediate reflection of a glass. We shall see everything face to face, according to the will and pleasure of God, at the end of this world (*age*) and more fully in the next."

... "Providence is pleased to open his mysteries to us by halves, in an imperfect light, that by even slight notices being excited, we may learn from the bounds of *this present dispensation*, the perfection of *that to come*. If ten men, ingenious in their way, were to write together concerning a future state, I do not believe two of those ten would unite through every head in the same opinion: if therefore in some, or in all, the friendly reader and myself part opinions, I can neither wonder, nor he be angry: Thebes is as far from Athens, as Athens from Thebes, and we keep the same distance from each other. Who comes nearest the truth is the only question. *When Elias comes*, he will tell many, and when Christ comes he will tell all things: if confuting me will afford light to the world, I have my wishes, for truth is my only scope and aim."

N.B. With respect to the *destruction* of the *material heavens and earth*, as stated by Mr. Faber,

there is an interpretation suggested by Dr. Whitby in accordance with the one intimated at the commencement of this pamphlet.

Thus on 2 Peter iii. 8, he says ;—

“There is, I confess, a middle opinion betwixt both these which interprets the words of St. Peter, in the 3d chapter, of the judgment of the great whore, or the Antichristian church, mentioned Rev. xvii. 1, after which is to follow the new heaven, and new earth, promised to the Jews, and to be accomplished in the calling of them to the Christian faith, and the flowing in of all nations to them. Concerning which, note,

“1. That the judgment, according to the predictions both of the prophets in the Old, and of St. John in the New Testament, is to be executed upon her by fire. So Dan. vii. 11 : ‘The beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.’ And ver. 26 : ‘The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it to the end.’ Accordingly in the judgment of the ‘whore, she shall be utterly burnt with fire ; for strong is the Lord that judgeth her.’ Rev. xvii. ch. xviii. 8, 9, 10.

“Note 2. That it is usual with the prophets to represent God’s judgments on the enemies of his church and people by the tragical expressions of *burning up the earth, dissolving the heavens*. Thus of the destruction of Babylon, which name was writ upon the fore-

head of the great whore, God speaks thus : ' Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel, and with fierce wrath, to lay the land desolate : for the stars of heaven, and the constellations shall not give their light, and the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not give her light : and I will make the heavens to shake, (or move away), and the earth shall remove out of its place.' Isa. xiii. 9, 10, 13. The indignation of the Lord against the Idumeans is represented in these dreadful words : ' The mountains shall be melted with their blood, and all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their host shall fall down as a leaf falleth from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree.' Of the destruction of Sennacherib and his people, God speaketh thus : ' The heavens shall vanish away like smoke ; the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner.' Isa. li. 6. See Deut. xxxii. 22. Jer. iv. 23, 24. Joel ii. 30, and iii. 15. Here then we see all the expressions used in the 3d chap. of St. Peter used also by the prophets, when they speak of the desolation of a nation and people, and especially of the enemies of the church ; which is sufficient to evince, that the apostle being himself a Jew, and writing to those Jews who were accustomed, to these expressions, might thus set forth the great destruction of the beast, mentioned Revelations, chap. xvii. and xviii. ; and by the

new heavens and new earth, that glorious state of the church, which was to ensue by the conversion of the Jewish nation, and the flowing in of all nations to them."*

* Query.

F I N I S.