

John Henry
 J. W. EDMONDS IN REPLY TO
John Henry
 BISHOP HOPKINS ON SPIRITUALISM.

THE Right Reverend Mr. Hopkins, the Episcopal Bishop of Vermont, has lately been delivering a course of lectures before the Young Men's Christian Association of St. Louis, two of which he devoted to the subject of Modern Spiritualism and to myself as connected with it.

He admitted the facts of the manifestations, conceding that they were not a delusion or a deception, but he avowed his own belief that the whole thing resulted from the direct agency of the Devil himself. He confessed he had never witnessed any of the manifestations, yet claimed that he could fairly discuss the subject, &c.

This is the purport of his lectures as I gather it from the report of them in the St. Louis Republican of the 12th and 15th of November instant.

As he has thus held me up to the world, denounced by a high dignitary of the church, as acting under the instigation of the Devil, I trust I may be pardoned for saying a few words in defence of myself.

Especially as I will do so by confining myself to a brief attempt to show what Spiritualism is, and what it teaches.

1. It enables us to know the thoughts and purposes, the secret intentions and character of those who are living around us. Over and over again has this been demonstrated, yet I'll venture to say the Bishop never heard of it; for if he had, he surely would be as ready as any one to see that in this feature of Spiritualism, there is a better protection against and prevention of hypocrisy and false pretences than all the preaching in the world has ever afforded.

It enables us to feel and to know that our most secret thoughts are known to the intelligence of the spirit world,—whatever the character of that intelligence, whether for good or evil. It has been for years and centuries preached to us that the Supreme Intelli-

1861, Oct. 14. Gift of Mrs. C. C. Tolson, of H.U.

gence knows our every thought. Yet how few have actually realized it—how few have acted as if they believed it, let the sins and perversions of mankind say. But now it comes so demonstrated that no man can doubt it. It is a fact as certain as that the sun shines at noon day. And I would ask, what greater preventive to vice can there be than the thorough conviction that the deepest secrets of our hearts are all known to the intelligence which is ever around and near us, and can be disclosed to the world?

3. It demonstrates the immortality of the soul by direct appeals to the senses. Hitherto the appeal has been to abstract reasoning to prove that; and what ill success has attended that effort no man knows better than the Right Rev. gentleman himself. He has been a lawyer in his day and he is aware from his knowledge of the world thus and otherwise acquired, that the greater portion of the educated classes among us have not yielded to the reasoning and have been, to say the least, skeptical as to an existence after this life. But now the proof comes with a force like that which establishes the fact that the grass grows and the water runs, and leaves no room for cavil in the sane mind. In the book from which the Bishop quoted so freely—though I am not advised that he quoted from that part—some twenty instances were given of conversions from an unbelief as to the future. Those were a few only of the cases which are within my own knowledge. They are numbered by hundreds and thousands, within the knowledge of Spiritualists, all over the land, and they show how powerful, how all-controlling is the argument in favor of man's immortality, which Spiritual intercourse furnishes—how much more convincing than all the preaching to which the subjects of such conversions have listened for years and years.

4. It demonstrates that the spirits of our departed friends can and do commune with us who are left behind. The substance of the Bishop's position on this topic is a denial of the fact, for he speaks of the "folly and unreasonableness of supposing that the spirits of our departed friends are suffered to remain on earth and to mingle in the affairs of men," and of the "unhappiness it would be to them to remain among strifes and sorrows which they could not alleviate." The same course was once taken by this same Prelate in regard to the manifestations themselves, and it was "folly and unreasonableness" to suppose they were any thing but delusion or deception. But he and many others of his calling

have been compelled to yield to the force of overwhelming testimony and admit their reality. So it would be with him on this point, if instead of persisting in the ignorance of the subject, of which he boasts, for conscience' sake, he would investigate for himself or take the testimony of those who have investigated, he would then learn that the identity of our departed friends is too clearly made out to be doubted by a rational mind. He would see too, how enduring is the love they bear to us still, that the cold grave does not quench its ardor, and that their care and sympathy for us is not removed at such immeasurable distance from us as he would teach, but that it is ever around and near us, leading us on toward that goal which in his creed is too far off for us to comprehend; but is now brought so near that we can understand what it is and learn how to attain it. He would learn that it would be no more a source of unhappiness to our departed friends thus to labor for our redemption from sin, than it is now for him in his ministerial functions, to lead a sinner to repentance, and, descending from his lofty position on the Episcopal bench, to enter the brothel or the prison house, and lift an erring brother to the light of the Gospel. He would learn to bear to the mourner's heart such comfort as he has never yet borne, and to speak to it, in most effective tones, of righteousness and the judgment to come. He would learn then, if he has not yet learned, that it could be no such great unhappiness for the christian mind to remain amid strifes and sorrows, where it could sympathize even if it could not alleviate, and he would see practically that there is no sorrow for suffering humanity which Heaven through its messengers cannot heal.

5. It demonstrates also that through this spirit influence, be it what it may, the sick are healed, the blind are made to see, the lame walk and "Devils are cast out" of those who are possessed.

These are some of the marvels which are now being worked in this land by the influence which is stigmatised by this Rev. Prelate as of the Devil. There are hundreds and thousands of witnesses of their existence around us everywhere,—and every man who chooses can behold them for himself. I could enumerate many, very many instances, but the limits of this paper forbid, and I have yet a few words to utter on other topics.

The Bishop says that "none of the so called discoveries were even new to mankind as proclaimed or received truths." In this he is

in a great measure correct. The great law which underlies the whole spiritual philosophy is that proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth—"Love God with all your might and your neighbour as yourself." Such is the law which for eighteen hundred years the Christian world has professed to believe—such the law which over thirty thousand priests are weekly preaching from as many pulpits in this nation. Yet with what effect? Let facts answer. Out of a population of nearly twenty-five millions not five millions are professing christians; and the sect to which this Rev. Prelate belongs cannot number one hundred thousand.

Is it not proper to ask why is this? It is because there is not inducement enough held out to man, to overcome the selfishness of his material nature, and obey this law of his spiritual existence. Eighteen centuries have demonstrated this, and it is high time that something should come to hold out this inducement to man. To perform that task is now the great mission of Spirit Inter-course and it is, day by day, as fast as we are capable of receiving it, performing it, by so revealing to us the condition into which we are to be ushered after death, that we cannot help realizing how necessary it is for us to obey the law in life. As the burnt child dreads the fire because it realizes the danger, so will man, when he shall fully realize what is the nature of the existence which is to follow this life, be ever on his guard against the temptations, with which his animal nature constantly surrounds him. This neglected function of the Priesthood, Spiritualism is now performing in our midst. And why not? The Bible is full of it. An Angel appeared to Hagar, Gen. 16. Three in the shape of men appeared to Abraham, Gen. 18, and two to Lot, Gen. 19. One called to Hagar, Gen. 21. and to Abraham, Gen. 22. One spoke to Jacob in a dream. Gen. 31. One appeared to Moses, Exod. 3. One went before the camp of Israel, Exod. 14. One met Balaam by the way, Num. 22. One spake to all the children of Israel, Judges 2. One spake to Gideon, Judges 6: and to the wife of Manoah, Judges 13. One appeared to Elijah, 1 Kings 19. One stood by the threshing floor of Ornan, 1 Chron. 21. One talked with Zachariah, Zach. 1. One appeared to the two Marys at the sepulchre, Matt. 28. One foretold the birth of John the Baptist, Luke 1. One appeared to the Virgin Mary, *ibid*; to the shepherds, Luke 2. One opened the door of Peter's prison, Acts 5.

Two were seen by Jesus, Peter, James and John, Luke 9, and one spake to John the Evangelist, Rev. 22.

It will not do to say these were angels—a distinct order of beings from man—for those seen by the apostles were Moses and Elias, and that seen by John, though called by him an angel, avowed himself to be his fellow servant and one of his brethren the prophets.

And now may we not ask, if man in the olden time could see and talk with angels—if in former ages the spirits of departed mortals could appear to and commune with those yet living—may we not, I say, ask wherein has man's nature so changed that the same thing may not happen to him now?

Why, how often in the ceremonies of the Bishop's own church, does he call upon his people to say "I believe in the Communion of Saints!" which the Articles of his Religion say "may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture;" and yet that communion which is holy when only spoken of, he would fain have us believe is evil when actually practised!

Briefly then to sum the argument up:—Spiritualism prevents hypocrisy: it deters from crime: it reclaims the infidel: it proves the immortality of the soul: it recognizes one God and man's responsibility to him: it enforces the great law of the Creator, by inducements hitherto unknown to man: it heals the sick: it gives sight to the blind: it cures the lame: it comforts the mourner: it enjoins upon all the utmost purity of life: it teaches that charity which rather mourns over than rejoices at the failings of our fellow mortals; and it reveals to us our own nature and what is the existence into which we are to pass, when this life shall end.

And this, we are taught by a Reverend Divine, holding a high rank in what he calls "The Church of God" is of the Devil! Alas, if it be, by what sign shall we know the work of God?

But the chief basis of the Bishop's position that Spiritual intercourse is Satanic, seems to be found in the revelations as to the spirit's surroundings after it has passed from this life. These he denounces as gross, material, and of the earth, earthy, and as conflicting with the sublime teachings of the gospel, and therefore "Devilish."

I do not learn that he paused to detail to his hearers, what is the condition of the future, according to the gospel, as he under-

stands it. I have known this attempted many times by divines, but I never knew any two of them to agree in their description; whereas in these revelations there is no discrepancy on this point.

I do not learn that in reading extracts from my book, he departed from the practice of his calling, namely that of drawing particular passages from their context and thus giving them a very different meaning from the true one: a practice which I do not hold very high either in law or gospel, and which I have often seen excite the smile of contempt among the intelligent minds in church.

Nor do I learn that he called the attention of his hearers to the reasons given in my book (Sect. 62 of vol. 2) for our faith on this subject, whereby they might have been enabled to judge for themselves, instead of being governed by his authority or mine.

But he seems to have contented himself with just so many and such extracts as would tend to prove his position and let the rest go. But let that pass

And let us inquire what is the great difference between us on this point which makes my teachings "Devilish," "unchristian" and "positively hurtful" and makes his to be holy, and sublime and gospel-like?

He teaches that man on dying, becomes suddenly and marvelously changed—that he passes far away from the earth, out of the reach of its cares, anxieties and affections—that he passes into a state of existence whose condition is entirely unknown, except that it is either unutterably miserable, or inexpressibly happy—that the state either of bliss or woe into which he is first ushered, never changes and is never ending, and that his condition of happiness or sorrow is not of his own creation and cannot be affected by aught he can do in this life, but is dependent particularly in its happiness upon a vicarious atonement.

On the other hand I believe that man is the creature of progression. That it is his destiny, from his birth to progress on to eternity, towards the Godhead—that no man is exempt from this destiny—that while man cannot prevent he can retard or accelerate its consummation, and he can make the interval of progress for long ages happy or woeful as he obeys or disregards the law of his spiritual nature which is love for God and man:—that death is but a continuation of this life, and this life but a preparation for the next.

that we pass into the next state of existence with all our faculties, memories, and affections, as we have cultivated or perverted them here—and that we are for a while, until our minds grow to become elevated above them, surrounded there by all those objects which would be calculated to give us the weal or woe we have earned for ourselves.

Such is in brief, the difference between us. I will not pause here to ask which is most acceptable to the rational mind? which is best supported by scripture? That would take too much room. But I will ask what is there in my belief that is "Devilish" "Unchristian," "hurtful?" And I will answer the question not in my own language, but in that of one of the Bishops of the Episcopal Church of this country—One who sits in the same House of Bishops with him of Vermont.

I extract from a sermon preached in Connecticut in 1852 and published :—

"I have now closed my argument and would be glad if time allowed to pass to the survey of another most interesting question. What are the conditions of our future existence? But as it is, I can only allude to one or two general points and then leave the subject to your individual reflection.

"1. In the first place, provision will undoubtedly be made hereafter for the culture and the exercise of all the intellectual and moral faculties of our nature. Heaven will not be a monotony. All which belongs to our nature, that is not sensual and sinful, will there find free scope for its development. Nothing then which we learn here is lost. No elevated taste is cultivated in vain. No healthy affection withers under the touch of death. There are strains of melody, and sights of beauty, and holy friendships in the Spiritual world. Every thing which God has made on earth and which man has left untouched by sin is only a symbol of something grander and more resplendent in reserve for the holy hereafter. What music will be heard in heaven! What prospects will charm the eye! What thoughts will be uttered there! What emotions will be enkindled there! What variety of employment, and yet nothing servile, nothing selfish! How is it then that we shrink from the future? why does eternity come before us as a cold blank void : a sea without a shore, moaning and groaning under a starless sky, where the soul floats like a

helmless wreck, solitary and despairing? Because there is a stain of corruption on the soul which needs to be washed out, because the sense of sin makes us afraid.

"2. In the second place we observe that to the righteous the future will be a state of constant and unending progress. The law of this progress may be essentially the same as it is now, only it will operate under greatly improved conditions. We shall never reach a point where we shall stop and make no farther advance, for then there would lie before us an eternity without occupation. All mortal creatures are capable only of a limited improvement because theirs is a limited existence, man must advance forever because he lives forever. The time will, no doubt, come when we shall look back on all that we have acquired and done in this world, as we now regard the experiences of our earliest in fancy and we shall wonder that we then thought ourselves so wise.

"3. And finally our future destiny will be in precise accordance with our deserts and character. We shall reap what we have sown. We shall begin our life hereafter as we close it here. There is no such thing as separating the man from his character, and there is no such thing as separating the character from the destiny."

Such are my sentiments too! Such are the principles which Spiritualism teaches! And now if they are "Devilish" "Unchristian," and "hurtful" in me, pray what must they be in the Right Reverend Bishop of Rhode Island, whose language it is that I have quoted?

A few words on one topic more and I have done.

I can hardly believe the Bishop is correctly reported when he is made to say that the law of the Scripture forbids our communing with the spirits of our departed friends, as well as dealing with witches and those having a familiar spirit; for I have never been able to find any such injunctions in Holy writ, nor can I conceive how that can be, and Peter and James and John escape condemnation for beholding Moses and Elias; or John, in the Revelations, for communing with the spirit of "One of his brethren the prophets," or Saul, obeying the spirit when struck with blindness on the way-side, or Peter when listening to the injunction to call not the Gentile unclean.

But it is true that in the law of Moses there are injunctions against dealing with witches or those having familiar spirits: but does the Rev. Prelate mean that his Christian hearers shall understand that that law is still binding upon us? He certainly must mean so or he would not quote it as evidence of our "unchristian" deportment. See then where it would bring him. One part of that law must be as binding as another and yet right by the side of that to which he appeals are commands like these:

Ye shall eat no manner of fat, Lev. 7, 23.

Ye shall not eat of the camel, the hare or the swine, Lev. 11, 8.

When ye reap the harvest of your land thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest, Lev. 19, 9.

Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed, neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee, Lev. 19, 19.

Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard, Lev. 19, 27.

Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, Lev. 19, 31.

The man who committeth adultery with another man's wife, the adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death, Lev. 20, 10.

A man also, or woman that hath a familiar spirit or that is a wizard shall surely be put to death. They shall stone them with stones, Lev. 20, 27.

In the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land; thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard, Lev. 24, 4.

Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof, Lev. 25, 10.

When thou buildest a new house then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, Deut. 22, 8.

Thou shalt make thee fringes on the four quarters of thy vesture, Deut. 22, 12.

A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord,—Deut. 23, 2.

Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee, Deut. 23, 15.

And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe, Ex. 21, 23, 4, 5.

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live, Ex. 22, 18.

Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause. Exod. 23, 3.

In six days shalt thy work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord.—Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day, Ex. 35, 2, 3.

But enough—enough in all conscience to show to the candid mind the basis on which this “Right Reverend father in God” rests his denunciations. No word of comment is necessary, unless it may be to inquire, if we are entirely to lose sight of the later teaching of Jesus: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you that ye resist not evil,” and of the consoling announcement, that on the command to love God and one another, hang all the law and the prophets, under the Christian dispensation?

J. W. EDMONDS.

New York, November 28, 1855.

LIFE'S PILGRIMAGE.

I see the mountain peaks that terminate

Life's journeyings, on my pathway gleam,
No longer clad as in my dreams of “fate”

Where the unreal full oft the real seem.

But now from off their spicy tops I deem

Fresh odors come to rouse my flagging zeal,

And where my sun throws down its lingering beam,

Æ I cannot tell thee why, but yet I feel

There, there, are gather'd loves death can alone reveal.

My ear is dull again, yet fairy sounds

Ring on the nerve as tho' upon yon cloud

Unnumbered angel bands had gather'd round

To tune anew behind its gorgeous shroud,

Not with the bolt of muttering thunders loud,

But thrilling notes that on the human heart

Shall whisper, “child of earth in fetters bound,

We come heaven's gladsome jubilee t' impart,

To break the sting of death and heal its poison'd smart.”

Newtown, L. I.,

H.