

SPIRITUALISM DEFENDED;

OR

An examination of the objections made by many of
the Clergy to the Subject, occasioned by the pe-
rusal of a sermon by the

REV. WM. BLISS ASHLEY.

Preached in St. Paul's Church, Syracuse, Feb. 13th,
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BY

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It is too much the custom of all classes to employ others to do their thinking ; and thus they become almost incapable of thought, and lose all self-reliance and individuality of character. We employ the physician to take care of our health, the lawyer to look after our property, and to the clergy too many of us entrust our souls. Hence, these three classes do nearly all the thinking, and the great mass of the people become essentially mere negatives, being controlled by the priest and politician, to be marshalled into sects and parties, and acted upon as mere tools in the hands of their leaders.

Such has been the state of society in all countries from the earliest ages of civilization down to the present period ; but it was never so obvious as at this time, and this gives alarm to the leaders, and many of them know not what course to take—they neither “affirm or deny” any point of controversy, and appear nervous and excited.

It is to be hoped, however, and we have good reason to believe that the time is fast approaching when *men will learn* the true dignity of *man*—and will therefore recognize their inalienable rights—and their consequent inalienable *duties*, and truly feel that they *cannot* be delegated to others. If our mental labors were always performed for us, in the most faithful manner, there would not be that objection to the employment of others that there now is,—particularly as regards religious matters. Often do we hear opposite doctrines advanced in the same sermon, a kind of *advancing* and *retreating* logic, runs through the vein of many discourses, so as to keep on terms with all, and give serious offence to none; (with the exception, however, of occasionally throwing off, over the heads of the audience, some bitter and acrimonious denunciations of Spiritualism, or some other unpopular subject,) at the same time owning that they have never investigated it. The people themselves are much to blame for this

looseness and carelessness of the pulpit; it arises from the little interest they take in spiritual matters. They attend church and listen to the sermon only as a matter of custom, and heed as *little* as they truly *hear*.

An able writer remarks:—"It is believed that owing to the numerous conflicting sects, the mysteries of the Scriptures, the difficulty of knowing what to believe, that opinions, varying little from Deism, and totally destitute of *spirit*, and vitality, and power to edify, have spread more or less through all classes, and that secret *infidelity* prevails to a *great extent*. Hence the pulpit is comparatively powerless, and Sabbath after Sabbath presents the sad spectacle of congregations to whom, in a great degree, the words of "the preacher are lifeless and without avail."

We have been led to these reflections from reading some remarks in the Syracuse Journal of May 24th, prefatory to a notice of the publication of the Rev. Wm. B. Ashley's sermon on "Modern Spiritualism," and also from a perusal of the sermon itself. And as we consider them both as embodying the main arguments (if *such* they can be called,) of the opposers of this subject, we will merely notice some of the leading points in both; but our attention will be mostly directed in showing the general scope and spirit of the sermon, not intending to give it a full review. In regard to that singular production, did not the cause of truth demand it, at our hands, we should not have been induced even to have done *this*, in consequence of the surprisingly superficial knowledge of the Rev. gentleman on the whole matter of which he writes. What force can a man carry with him, either as an advocate or an opponent of *any* cause, if his knowledge of that cause is but secondary or of a hearsay origin?

We would despise the man who would attempt to enlighten an audience on science or philosophy, if he told them at the same time, that upon *this*, *that*, or the *other* essential point, he neither "affirmed or denied" anything. If a man's mind is not made up, on any subject, he is not qualified to enlighten us on that subject,—if it is made up and he chooses to suppress his convictions, this shows too much selfish policy, and

we lose all confidence in the integrity of his *heart* as well as of his logic.

In the first opening of the discourse, Mr. Ashley distinctly recognizes an "Evil One," a real orthodox personal devil—our spiritual adversary, who "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," and the whole tenor of all his arguments seems to rest on this idea, as a foundation stone. We know that this is *old theology*, and so is a hell of literal and material fire and brimstone;—but we had charitably supposed that even the conservatism of Mr. Ashley had long ago given way to the inroads of common sense, if not to the light of calm and unprejudiced analysis, sufficiently far to make him ashamed of such "absurdities" which have been too long used to terrify the weak minded, who do not think for themselves. "But," in the words of a beautiful writer, "the day of intimidation has gone by. Those liquid fires, whose terrors have been so long used, have been quenched by the pure waters of *truth*, flowing from the fountain of *love*; and their lurid glare is lost in the brilliant light shed by the Sun of Righteousness, which has risen with healing on its wings."

A personal devil, with a power little inferior to God himself, has been the main stay of the heathen world, and it is not to be wondered at, for a belief in this gives to ignorance a ready solution for the existence of evil, without the trouble of serious investigation. This doctrine, like some others from the heathen world, has been engrafted into our modern theology, but it will not stand the test of this enlightened age. All thinking persons who can read the character of God through his material and majestic—through his minute and beautiful works—and, indeed, *all* who *truly* love Him, and cherish in their hearts a true and proper respect for Him, reject it at once, putting aside all authorities which conflict with his character of Wisdom and Love, and as delighting in the happiness of his creatures. A personal devil! who made him! and for what end? If we credit our spiritual teachers, this adversary of all good was created by Him who created all things, and is of course responsible for all that He has created. And now, we ask in all candor, could an Omnipotent Being, who could see the end from the beginning, whose attributes are wisdom, justice, and benevolence; could such a

Being be 'the Creator of a power antagonistic to himself?— Could he be the Creator of such an "Evil one," and give him power to deceive and torment the children of men, while at the same time he denies all such power to good and benevolent spirits? Such a theory comes in direct conflict with either the wisdom, the power, or the benevolence of the Deity. Yet deny or disprove this theory, and the Rev. Mr. Ashley's sermon may as well be put into the fire; for upon this basis are all his arguments placed.

Evil exists, but it is not a *created principle*; it is not directly from the Creator, but from the creature; it is merely incidental to the ignorance and imperfection of his being, perhaps it is inseparable from it. The All-wise Creator alone is perfect and immutable, "without variableness or shadow of turning"—evil is temporary and transitory, and the philosophy of the great English poet is more sound than many may be willing to admit:

All nature is but art unknown to thee,
All *chance* direction, which thou can'st not see,
All discord, harmony not understood,
All partial evil, universal good,
In spite of pride, in erring reason spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is,—is right.

This last line is perhaps carrying our philosophy a little too far. We do not consider that whatever is now existing *is right*. There are many wrongs—great wrongs, that should be righted, but we would not impute them to our Heavenly Father, for as far as He is concerned, what the poet says is true. But the belief in a personal devil throws the responsibility of the existence of evil upon the Creator—and if bad spirits as emanating from the "Evil One," are suffered to beset us unknown and unperceived, "both when we wake and when we sleep," and the good angels not even permitted to counteract them—then the benevolence of our Creator is thrown into a still deeper shade. Away then with such soul-revolting theories! no matter where found. They may do for the unbelieving, for those who look only at the letter of a precept. but not for the spiritual minded, and those who have truly the love of God dwelling in their hearts.

The more learned and intelligent men are, the more clearly they perceive the unbounded goodness of God, but rude

and ignorant persons, in consequence of their own contracted intellects, and selfish natures, are sensible of little more than the evils of life, which everywhere press around them—hence came the idea of an Evil Deity, or the “Evil One,”—and we can distinctly trace it to a heathen source, and it can be retained in no theology except by heathen logic.

The almost inevitable sequel to an Evil Deity, is the principle of sacrifices, for none but such would require them, and this agrees with the practice of the heathen world, for they never make sacrifices to their good Deity. Unhappily our modern divines have blended together heathen theology and christian morality, which it is difficult to harmonize—hence the incessant contentions of different sects, hating and persecuting each other; that what is *falsely termed* the *Christian* world, has presented for centuries. And we verily believe that the mind of any individual who thinks at all, will be confused and perplexed and tormented with conflicting doubts, until he expels Satan from the universe, tears him from his creed, and banishes him from his heart.

It is true that the Jews made sacrifices to the true God—but it was to the *supposed* attributes of wrath and vengeance, which they hoped to appease. They were just emerging from the darkness of heathenism, with only a dim light to guide them, and were not capable of considering the greatness and majestic holiness of His character. The age in which they lived was literally an age of force, and they were a people so wicked, so given to crime and idolatry, that their leaders, in order to restrain them, were obliged to represent God as one whose principal attributes were those of wrath and vengeance, “as a man of war,” who delighted in the overthrow of his enemies, and would pursue them and punish them to the latest generation, even to the extent of involving the innocent in their destruction—and acts were committed under either the pretended sanction of “Thus saith the Lord,” or they really believed it to be such, that would disgrace the character of any earthly monarch in our own day.

In the article in the Syracuse Journal to which we have previously referred, the writer called our attention to the absurdities and atrocities of Spiritualism, citing the case of a

man somewhere in Pennsylvania, who being a firm believer, received a message from his spiritual adviser, requiring him to make a sacrifice of cats. He readily complied, as a true believer in sacrifices should. Another instance is related, says the same writer, but neither name, circumstances nor locality are stated, not even the latter as definitely as "somewhere," where a spirit commanded a man, "the father of a beautiful boy to slay his son, and offer him up as a sacrifice in propitiation for a great sin. The foolish father was discovered on the point of taking the life of his fond child, and was prevented from doing so only by being secured and closely confined." "Wretched fanatic!" "The foolish father!" "Horrible monstrosities!" says the Journal. So say we. No one can go beyond us in condemnation of such wickedness and folly. Here we have a picture of the principle of sacrifices, for it can be seen in its true light only, where it is brought home to us in the form of a charge against a condemned class. This circumstance reminds us, (although the writer seems to have lost sight of it,) of a similar one recorded in the Old Testament. No doubt Abraham believed that he was commanded of God to offer up his son Isaac—and this man no doubt really believed that *he* also was commanded to perform the same act by a spirit. Because the former occurred some thousand years ago, therefore it is all right, no *delusion* there!

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view ;"

but when the very same thing occurs in our day, why then, forsooth, the man is considered insane. Was not he doing the same thing in obedience to a spiritual command, as Abraham was, yet one is applauded and the other condemned.—We consider it a very *unnatural command*, and as *such*, this man should have very much doubted whether it came from a good source. For we are commanded by the beloved Apostle "not to believe every spirit, but *try them*, (i. e., discriminate, or use our judgment in regard to the nature of their communications,) and this person should have had more faith in his moral obligations, both in regard to his own nature, and to the character of his God, to have considered this command as coming from a good spirit.

If God ever gave such a command in any age of the world as a trial of faith, He would surely be as likely to give it now;

for there never was a time when the church or the world more imperatively required it, for man was equally fallible then as now; and God as equally infallible and unchangeable, and his laws as immutable.

Our common sense might lead us to question the facts referred to in the Journal, and pronounce them slanders, so indefinitely are they narrated; but we are not as disposed to deny facts as our opponents. For almost universally, when facts are presented in any of our public journals which corroborate the truth of Spiritualism, "when even vouched for by names whose *testimony*, if the facts were in issue on the trial of a man for his life, would convict and execute him," these very facts have been ignored, "and with this testimony before them, they have in the most violent terms denounced, not only the subject, but the investigators." Therefore we will admit the facts, but deny the inference, viz: that these persons were true Spiritualists. They were probably simple-minded men, who, perhaps, had witnessed some of the modern manifestations, and had sufficient honesty to credit their own senses, and in consequence might have been called Spiritualists; but their practical action in relation to the sacrifices, was the legitimate fruits of their previous theology. They were naturally religious idolaters, and semi-heathen, as many are, who sincerely receive the old orthodoxy of the pulpit.

It is now proper to explain who are Spiritualists and what is Spiritualism. In the article in the Journal, the writer has the candor to admit that amongst its converts, are "men of more than ordinary sagacity and penetration." This, coming from a bitter opponent, should be alone sufficient to cause the reflecting to pause before they join the mad and ignorant cry of the multitude in crucifying it. That distinguished scholar and statesman, the Hon. N. P. Tallmadge, says, (in his masterly Introduction to the work entitled "The Healing of the Nations," which for beauty of diction, true Christian spirit, and profound critical acumen, cannot be surpassed,) as follows:

"No cause in the history of the world has made such rapid and unprecedented progress as "Spiritualism" since its first introduction. Unaided, and without an effort on the part of its friends and advocates, and with an opposition un-

paralled for its perseverance and bitterness, it has moved on-ward with a momentum as resistless as it is overwhelming. It already numbers in its ranks talent of the highest order in every department of science and the arts, the most distinguished of the legal profession, the most elevated of judicial functionaries, the most eminent of legislative bodies, the most enlightened of the press, and the most pious and learned of the pulpit."

And he further adds :

"Notwithstanding all this rapid progress and wide spread belief in "Spiritual Manifestations," there is nevertheless a pervading ignorance on the subject among the masses hardly to be anticipated in this enlightened age. At the same time, the fault is not theirs, but is chargeable to those whose duty it is, and whose position requires, that they should enlighten and instruct their fellows in what concerns their temporal and eternal welfare, namely, those who control those *mighty engines for good or evil*, the *Pulpit* and the *Press*.—But there are high and honorable exceptions in both these departments."

"But the public press, as a whole, is without excuse for the manner in which it has treated this subject. When called upon to publish the views of its friends upon which their comments have been made, they have not only *refused*, but have made that reasonable request the ground for renewed attack, and still more violent assault. Their readers have therefore remained in ignorance not only, but have been plunged into deeper darkness, by reason of the one-sided and distorted views which have been presented by the boasted intelligence and the enlightened liberality of the American press."

"The pulpit, too, has lent its aid to confirm this ignorance, instead of attempting to dissipate it by wise counsels and discreet conduct. Its denunciations have been hurled against the cause and its advocates, regardless alike whether they struck down friend or foe, and without reflecting that the rebound might injure much more the assailant than the assailed. Instead of attempting to enlighten the bigotry of the age, its efforts have only tended to sink it still lower in the scale of

progressive intelligence, and to prevent its further advancement."

But this may be considered as a digression, and we will now return to our previous question, as to who *are* the Spiritualists. They are isolated individuals, without association or concert, (except in some of our large cities,) from every calling and position in life, from the most gifted in mind, to the most ignorant and lowly. They are, however, alike in some characteristics. They are all believers in the Ancient Manifestations, as recorded both in the Old and New Testament, which they think tend to corroborate and prove the Modern Manifestations; as the latter also does the former. And for one to say that he really believes in the former, and yet deny the latter, is considered by them as *stupid blindness* or *rank infidelity*. They all have sufficient independence of character to credit their senses, and to admit the logic of facts, whatever be the result. And they are also similar in another respect,—they all aim to cultivate the love-principle, divinely incorporated in our natures, which has been too much lost sight of, by professing Christians generally, and endeavor to strictly follow the teachings of our blessed Saviour in all things; considering his authority *as a teacher*, paramount to every other.

In all other respects they are as different in intellect, in sympathy, in taste, in habits, in social position and in religious prejudices, as it is possible for persons to be. Such are Spiritualists. Now we will endeavor to define the question as to what is "Spiritualism,"—and here we have so wide and comprehensive a field that we feel our inability to do it justice in our limited space, in which we can merely give its outlines.

Spiritualism which represents the opposite of the materialistic philosophy, was "the belief of the ancient world before the time of Christ," and has also been the universal belief of the Christian church since that time, as can be fully proved; and not until these "modern Spiritual Manifestations" were presented, have we found men bold enough to deny the faith of their fathers, the belief of their churches, and the universal belief of the Christian World. "But even now their number

is comparatively few, and the time is not distant when even those few will confess in sorrow and shame the folly of their denunciations."

It is a theory which cannot be explained on any other hypothesis than that generally adopted by Spiritualists, for every other has been tried in vain. No settled theory has yet been established, but certain general conclusions they have been forced to adopt, and mostly against their previous prejudices. "This is a strong argument, for there are not many persons in this or any other country, that have made for themselves a faith upon their own rational convictions and investigations. Almost all *adopt* their belief (as it is called,—it is rather acquiescence,) from their kindred and friends, or their pastor. In this respect this theory is unlike every other, for its advocates bring no sectarian prejudices to its support, and it is the result of no metaphysical system of logic, and from no "Thus saith the Lord." It is eminently a common sense faith. There is no mysticism about it. It does not require one should swallow all the dogmas of a teacher, and adopt opinions upon the "ipse dixit" of some one equally liable to error. It is the result of material phenomena that men may see as well as read of. It deals in matters of fact, *observed, distinct and irresistible*, which are susceptible of demonstration. "Every man can have for himself personally, such proofs of Spiritualism, as would be admitted through the most stringent rules of a court of justice,—nay, better proofs—for they do not depend upon the wilful swearing of witnesses. In this case the man is himself the witness against his former prejudices."

We have a system of astronomy drawn from observed astronomical facts; we have a system of chemistry, the deductions of chemical facts; and we have a system of Geology, in strict correspondence with facts, and indeed the facts make the science. So it is in Spiritualism; and it is as vain to rail against it and denounce it, as it is now to rail against astronomy, Chemistry or Geology. Indeed, these very sciences were denounced and vilified in the days of their infancy, by the *Church, the priest and the bigot*—as these now, sneer at and ridicule Spiritualism. So little have its opponents investigated the matter, that many of them really do not

know what the true Spiritualists' theory is. They simply know that strange facts have been witnessed, which they regard as delusion, or mere modern necromancy, although vouched for on the authority of responsible names. "They seem to forget that something is due to human testimony—that testimony on which our belief in *all things* is founded—that testimony on which the *Sacred Scriptures* themselves have been handed down to us, through a long series of more than eighteen hundred years, and without which we should have no authentic evidence of their existence." Thus it follows, that those whose *duty* it is, as spiritual teachers, to investigate these facts, seem to have no desire to do so, but on the contrary, "they shut out the light from their people, and cause them to walk in darkness," thus literally making themselves the "blind guides," spoken of by our Saviour.

We will now endeavor to give a succinct theory of what has been deduced from the facts of Spiritualism,—but we will not stop to cite these facts, or to analyze them, for that has been most ably done by Professor Hare of Philadelphia, who ranks amongst the most eminent of scientific men, and Major Raines, of the U. S. A., who is distinguished as one of the most accomplished electricians of the age. These gentlemen commenced their investigations with a design at refutation, and against their pre-conceived opinions, were drawn step by step to the irresistible conclusion that disembodied human spirits do communicate with men. Hence, for the Rev. Mr. Ashley, or any one else, to ignore these facts, at this day, places them on the same *low* intellectual level as it would to deny the rotundity of the earth, and its revolution on an axis, or to deny the fact that other worlds exist thirteen hundred times greater than this, attended by moons and luminous rings, or to deny that almost miraculous fact that galvanism can give a great temporary magnetic power to soft iron; *that power* which is used in the magnetic telegraph.

Some do, and many more would deny such great astronomical and scientific truths, were it popular to do so; and such like characters deny the facts of Spiritualism, even against the evidence of their own senses, simply because they cannot comprehend them.

But to return. It is an immutable law of nature, as immutable as the existence of God himself, that every effect must have a cause; and therefore whatever effects are observed, the adequate and corresponding cause is *there*, visible or invisible. If the cause is not among the elements of the natural or material world, it must be from the spiritual world, and every investigator of the facts in question has been driven to the spiritual world for the explanation of them. These facts demonstrate :

1st. That invisible spirits move material bodies—and in a variety of ways exert physical force; this force embodies intelligence, and, therefore, cannot be the action of an inanimate principle, like electricity or galvanism.

2nd. This intelligence teaches that man lives after death, but is not *immediately* changed either in character or inherent knowledge, and is in a state of continued progression, according to his will and desires—that the spirit-world is around and about us, and that the dead are not necessarily banished to a far off somewhere.

3d. Spirits teach that they have no absolute knowledge of the future, and that impossibilities exist with them as well as with us in the body, and that each condition has its corresponding sphere of powers and duties.

4th. Spiritualism does not contradict the Bible, but greatly elucidates it, and disrobes it of all superstition and inconsistencies, and harmonizes all its precepts. They consider that “the Manifestations prove the Bible, and that the Bible proves the Manifestations.” This is not mere assertion, (as is the case with those who denounce Spiritualists, as not believing in the Bible,) but it is a conclusion, founded upon “a patient and *thorough investigation* of the whole subject.” We believe that all the truths necessary to salvation are to be found in the Bible,—but in the conflict of religious opinions it is impossible to ascertain what these truths are, satisfactorily; and what has been long wanting on this matter, is more light to bring out, and more lucidly explain those truths. Light has been shed from time to time during the

Christian era, and will continue to be imparted through all coming time.

“What though the written word be born no more,
The Spirit's revelation still proceeds,
Evolving all perfection.”

“The very obscurity that surrounds the Bible is evidence that more light would be shed upon it as the world became better prepared to receive it.” This our Saviour clearly taught when he told his disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot *bear* them now.” This plainly teaches the doctrine of human Progression,—and also that contrary to that prevailing error amongst all our different sects, that all revelation ceased with the age of the Apostles; that new light might be expected from time to time—and now the Bible must be re-read and studied anew, by the light of Spiritualism.

The great theological problems, worked out on *old principles*, must be *re-computed*, and to this, the clergy are generally opposed.

The Rev. Mr. Ashley seems also to have adopted the prevalent error, above referred to. This he says, the Bible teaches, and that “it also pronounces a malediction upon all who should pretend to make any new or additional revelations”—and then refers us to several texts in proof of this. Let us now examine these texts by the light of reason. John 14, 26, also 16, 13. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Howbeit, when He the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he *will show you things to come*.” If these teach that “there shall be no further revelations vouchsafed to us,” then our reason is exceedingly obtuse, and our intellects dull in the extreme, for we can see that it teaches quite the contrary. There is here no limited time specified, after which the Holy Spirit should cease to edify and influence the true followers of Christ, but the powers and inspiration of the Holy Spirit are to extend to all ages. If these texts teach that all revelations ceased with the Apostles, Mr.

Ashley may as well argue from other texts that the Church of Christ is also limited to the Apostles time, and that all the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit ceased with the closing up of the Bible.

The next text he quotes is Col. 2, 9, 10.—“For in Him, (i. e., in Christ,) dwelleth all the fullness of the God-head bodily, and ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” We cannot perceive the force and relevancy of this, to the point in question, and we think that there are few, if any, who can.

Then he gives us Gal. 16 to 10 inclusive. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him who called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel: which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed; as we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach *any* other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” This reproof (addressed by the apostles to back-sliders among the Galatians, and equally applicable to those of our own time,) is quoted as proof that “maledictions are pronounced upon all who should pretend to make any new, or any additional revelations,” as also the passage from Rev. The former refers to preaching or receiving any other gospel than that of the gospel of Christ, and “whoever should preach any other gospel, let him be accursed,”—and so say *we*—for this is likewise applicable to our own times, in which we often hear a different gospel preached than Christs’ gospel. It is giving this text a forced construction to mean that any who make “new or additional revelations,” are accursed, for they may be made in confirmation of the Gospel of Christ, and in harmony therewith. The text from Rev. 22, 18—“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.”—By “this book” is meant this book of Rev. or the Apocalypse of St. John, which was written by the latter while banished to the Isle of Patmos, in the form of a manuscript by itself, which St. John designates a book. This manuscript was not received into the canon of Scripture, (owing to a diversity of

opinions as to its merits, being written in a rhapsodical style; of difficult interpretation,) until some hundred years after it was written, as is well known by every reader of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History. This fairly proves that this passage does not refer to the closing up of Revelation. If the Rev. gentleman can produce no stronger authority than the above texts, to prove that all spiritual intercourse and revelations ceased with the apostolic age, it certainly "has a significance which can be readily apprehended by most minds.

We have now candidly examined this gentleman's arguments on his side of the question—let us now turn and produce our own in opposition to it. In doing this we shall give as proof that *same* historical testimony, that is considered of such paramount importance, (in proof of the apostolical succession, the office of a Bishop, and other essential matters,) by the Episcopal Church. Belonging as we do, and ever have, to this church, we have been taught from our childhood to consider the authority of the Apostolical Fathers as equal to the writers of the New Testament, on all points. And being still warmly attached to that church, we are greatly surprised and grieved, that a clergyman belonging to it, should prove so recreant to the principles and belief of it, as thus to entirely overlook or ignore what its fathers have taught us, and the church has recognized, from the earliest time on this subject.

"That such a thing as a cessation of spiritual intercourse and revelations, was probably not *even-thought* of for a long time after the apostolic age," can be fully proved from the writings of these same "Apostolical Fathers;" and also from those who wrote subsequently. Those of St. Barnabas, St. Clement, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, and St. Hermas, abound with accounts of Spiritual Manifestations, similar in almost every respect to those occurring now,—and if Mr. Ashley will again examine them, setting aside all pre-conceived notions, he will find them so. "They were claimed in their day as evidence that the true spirit of Christianity dwelt in the church." "Those epistles," to which we have referred, were read in public religious assemblages throughout Christendom for four hundred years after Christ; and though they were excluded by fallible men from the canon of the New Testament, they were considered as possessing an intrinsic value

very little, if at all inferior to that of the apostolic writings themselves." Therefore they must have received the *fullest sanction* of the church, and "among the very prominent claims and teachings of at least several of them, was the doctrine of an existing and post-apostolic spiritual communion, and we have seen that the claims of these productions are such as to supply every intermediate *link* in the history of such communication between the age of the Apostles and the middle of the second century. In addition to their testimony, Justin Martyr, who flourished about the year 150, declares, according to Eusebius, that the gift of prophecy shone brightly in the church in his time. A little after the time of Justin Martyr, about the year 180, Athenagoras was commissioned by his Christian brethren to carry an apology to the Emperor of Rome, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. "In this apology," (which was a tract written by Athenagoras, in defence of the Christians,) is given a clear description of what in our day would be called "speaking mediums," and which seemed to have abounded in the church under the name of prophets and prophetesses. "I call them prophets," says he, "who being *out of themselves* and *their own thoughts*, did utter forth whatsoever by the *impelling power* of the spirit, he wrought in them; while the divine operator served himself of them or their *organs*, even as men do of a trumpet, blowing through it. Thus have we prophets for witnesses and affirmers of our faith, and is it not equal and worthy of human reason, O ye Emperors, to yield up our faith to the divine spirit, who moves the mouths of the prophets as his instruments."

"Near the close of the second century, Ammonius Saccas, a learned Christian, and who was at the same time deeply imbued with the Platonic philosophy, opened a school at Alexandria, which became greatly celebrated. Among other things taught by him was the art of procuring communing communion with spirits, or demons, for "demons" then simply signified as it does now, an invisible intelligence (or God-admonisher) without respect to goodness or badness." "The celebrated Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, who suffered martyrdom about the year 292, was said to be himself largely endowed with spiritual gifts, and he bears ample testimony in his *Libri Contra Hæreses*, to the wide prevalence of these gifts among the Chris-

tians of his day." He mentions that some do cast out devils, truly and effectually; that others have fore-knowledge of things future, and have visions and the gift of prophesying, others heal the sick, and he adds, as we have already said, the dead are raised, and do survive with us many years. He also says that it is impossible for him to reckon up the number of gifts which the church all the world over has received and does exert even every day, in the name of Jesus Christ crucified. "Moreover," he adds, "they *now* speak in all tongues by the spirit of God, even as we ourselves have heard, and profitably do make manifest the secrets of men's hearts, and openly publish the mysterious things of God." Does not the Rev. Mr. A. see here a resemblance to the Spiritualism of our own day; if he does not, the reason is obvious.—The prevalence of "Spiritual Manifestations," which have been continued to the faithful in the church in all ages, is a literal fulfillment of our Saviour's promise, and gives his words *some meaning*, when he says, "that all who *truly believe* in him, shall perform even greater works than he did."

"The learned Tertullian, (who died about A. D. 231,) bore also the most ample testimony to the existence of the same spiritual gifts in his times. In his book concerning the soul, he presents scenes, which have their exact counterpart in the spiritual developments of our own times. He describes our clairvoyant and healing mediums—and also presents the Spiritualist idea of a disembodied human spirit, as seen by some in his day, and the true nature of soul,—and this cannot be considered as *mere accident*, but is the eternal, outstanding *truth* of the thing described; and which is also in strict accordance with the Bible, in its accounts of disembodied human spirits. He says, "that among other things the medium told them that a corporeal soul appeared to her, and the spirit was beheld by her, being of a quality not *void* and *empty*, but rather such as might be handled, delicate, and of the color of light and air, and in all respects bearing the human form." This very thing is constantly occurring in our own times, by those who are now styled "seeing mediums."

At the latter end of the third century, Origen acquaints us that though the gift of prophesying still remained, yet it was

somewhat decreased, and after this period, spiritual gifts did decline, and grow rare in comparison with the time preceding; which may be rationally attributed to the fact, that the Church, from "being at first poor and persecuted, and being so, had continued faithful, and spiritually minded, was then becoming rich and powerful, and involved in that degree of worldliness and sensualism," and looking more at the letter of Scripture than imbibing the spirit of Christs' teachings, all which is entirely opposed to spirituality.

"But although these extraordinary gifts were not so common as they had been before, the period referred to, they still continued to be recognized, as pertaining to particular individuals, and as being exercised on various occasions."—As one significant instance of this fact, it may be mentioned that Gregory, Bishop of Cesarea, and a pupil of the great Origen during the latter half of the third century, received by common consent, the title of *Thaumaturgus*, or *wonder-worker*, on account of the many miracles he performed."—According to Eusebius, spiritual communications continued in the church during the age of Constantine, in the fourth century, and that monarch himself sometimes experienced them.

The belief in communications from good as well as evil spirits, prevailed to a great extent during the latter part of the fourth century, in confirmation of which, we could cite the learned and accomplished Ambrose, bishop of Milan.

We think that we have now fully substantiated the fact, that Spiritualism, as it now exists, is not a "new fangled doctrine," or that it is "falsely termed" such, as has been averred by both of our opponents. We might, in addition to the authorities which we have quoted to prove our position, produce a great mass of testimony in confirmation of its being the belief of the church, and that it did exist in the church after the apostolic age, and was continued in the church in an unbroken succession for several centuries subsequent to that period, until the church became so sensually corrupt, and so morally defective, as to render it unfit for spirit communion. This power, which was promised by our Saviour, has never been withdrawn from the church, but the

church, as she became more and more unfaithful, gradually withdrew herself from this high and holy privilege.—“Although the records of spiritual manifestations, between the age of Constantine and the fourteenth or fifteenth century, should be received with a more than usual degree of suspicion, unless fully corroborated and authenticated, still it is certain, that however the Catholic church may deride these at the present day, yet she has not lost her faith in these and also miraculous gifts; and her history is dotted all along with seemingly well authenticated and well corroborated facts, which go to prove that faith, as something more than a mere superstitious fancy.” “Even the Protestant churches themselves, during the earlier portion of their history, seem to have generally recognized the fact of occasional interference in various sensible forms, from the unseen world, as may be fully proved from their writings; and although from the close of the third century down to our *own times*, there have always been those who standing nearly on the line of demarcation between Christian faith and unfaith, have derided and ridiculed the idea of any existing and present spiritual manifestations. It is only about one hundred years since that the persuasion became general, even in the Protestant churches, that all spiritual manifestations and revelation ceased with the apostolic age.”*

We think it may now be distinctly seen that those who have adopted this now prevalent opinion, have done so “in direct opposition to the uniform testimony of all ancient ecclesiastical history, and to the general belief of the church and her learned clergy, for seventeen out of the eighteen hundred years of her existence. And if there has been through the long ages succeeding the apostles, a gradual decline in Spiritualism, and a final and almost total extinction of faith in its existence, this fact, with the bitter opposition in the church to it at this time, must, we think, be taken as a somewhat humiliating commentary on its spiritual history, reminding us forcibly of the apostle Paul’s prophecy of the “*falling away*” that would occur.”

The Rev. gentleman, on page 16 of his discourse, again brings in a forced text, or we may rather say he perverts the

*This error became orthodox through Bishop Middleton, who published a work on it in 1749. In the preface Dr. Middleton admitted that his views were then opposed by nine-tenths of the christian world.

passage, to prove that "the Holy Spirit did predict" that a "state of things," similar in many respects to what Spiritualism now presents, "should arise, and that Devilish spirits should be its authors." It is from 1 Tim. 4, 1.—"Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;" but he quotes no further, and he thereby destroys the sense. The apostle goes on to tell us what this departing from the faith, and doctrines of devils means. He says, in the second and third verses, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to *marry*, and *commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created, to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." These three verses are plainly designed to go together, and to quote the first verse alone, certainly perverts the meaning. This passage, taken as a whole, has been universally explained by learned divines, as alluding to the doctrines of the Romish Church, among which are, celibacy, abstaining from meats, &c., and we think that it bears this lucid explanation on the face of it.

Proceeding on this unreliable basis, he goes on to say, on page 17, "Now in view of these facts, also, to wit, that there are no predictions in Holy Scripture, that any such phenomena as we now behold, should ever be produced through the agency of disembodied human spirits, and that there are prophecies, which appear to include them within their scope, in which they are expressly ascribed to lying spirits; in view of these facts I ask, which is the more probable, supposing them to proceed from any *spirits*, that they are human, or that they are devilish?" If the passage above referred to, is all the proof that he can bring that "lying spirits," were to be the authors of the present phenomena, and that text is clearly found to refer to a different thing entirely, then we ask, upon what does this gentleman's logic now rest?

But to proceed. We can see no necessity that there should be any predictions in Holy Scripture of what was constantly occurring, and was universally believed. That there are allusions made to "lying spirits," controlling different persons, no one will presume to deny. Spiritualists believe in evil

spirits, but from this fact, they do not falsely infer that there can be no good spirits, who are allowed to communicate with man, but they believe that both have the power of holding intercourse with mankind. "Because the communications are both good and evil, and because there are from both good and evil spirits, it is no objection to the position, that the manifestations are according to God's law, for the law of communicating governs both, and is established for wise purposes, even though the wisdom of man should not be able fully to comprehend it. It should not excite our distrust or wonder, any more than the account that the Lord put a "lying spirit" in the mouths of four hundred prophets in the time of Ahab, to persuade him to go to battle for the purpose of his own destruction. 1 Kings 22, 23. "That they are from spirits both good and evil, is proof of their spiritual source, for the same law that helps the evil to communicate, enables the good to communicate also." Can any one be so illogical as to suppose that they should be governed by different laws? It may be asked, then how are we to distinguish the good from the evil? We answer, by the rule laid down in 1 John iv, 1, 2, 3, before quoted. If the spirits, both bad and good, did not hold intercourse with men, why should this warning be given and this rule be laid down by which to "try" them; which warning and which rule were delivered to mankind, after Christ had gone to his Father, and were designed for all future time?

There prevails to a great extent in the church of our day, what to us appears an erroneous opinion, and which pervades Mr. Ashley's discourse, in connection with his doctrine of a personal Devil, which latter has been fully proved to have been of heathen origin. He says, "according to the plain teachings of the Holy Scriptures, there are three classes of created spirits, to wit, Angels, Devils and disembodied human spirits." Let us now examine this doctrine of the existence of angels, as a distinct order of intelligences, from human spirits.

We are aware that some commentators have undertaken to prove this from the Scriptures, but they have never been able to find any distinct authority for it in, but have rather inferred

it from them ; and others have endeavored to prove that angels are the "spirits of just men made perfect;" and as it appears to us, have ably done this. One of the latter class, among the reverend clergy, says :

"We have no other idea of an angel than that of the spirit of a just man made perfect. The notion that angels were created such ; that they existed prior to mankind, and were made a superior race, are rather the intimations of poetry, than the teachings of revelation. The Scriptures frequently and forcibly show the existence of angels, but it is nowhere said that such was their state by original creation ; nor is anything written respecting them, which is not consistent with the idea that they are the spirits of just men made perfect, enjoying the immortality proper to their natures, and performing the uses for which they had qualified themselves during their lifetime in the world."

In support of this, he further adds :

Heb. xii, 23.—"Man was created in the image and likeness of God, and in consequence was the highest object of the Divine Creation." The Scriptures represent angels to be glorified men ; and they almost invariably speak of them as such. The three angels who appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, are called men, as well as those who visited Lot, to warn him of the destruction of Sodom—and they are all represented as partaking food. The angel with whom Jacob wrestled is called a man ; and the angel who appeared to the wife of Manoah is called the man of God. The angel Gabriel, sent to Daniel, is called the man Gabriel ; and the angels who were seen by the women at our Lord's sepulchre, are called "men in shining garments," which exactly corresponds to the spiritual body heretofore described. "The angel whom John was about to worship, said, "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets. Rev. 22, 9—And this is the angel sent by the Lord God to show unto his servant John the things of which he testified. "And the measure of the wall of the holy city is said to have been the measure of a man, that is of an angel. Rev. xxi, 17." These facts carry such force with them, as to leave this question beyond doubt or cavil. For the mean-

ing of the term angel, in almost every instance mentioned in Scripture, means spirit. In Acts 12,—When Peter came and knocked at the door, at the house of Mary, the mother of John, where many were gathered together praying, when they were told that Peter was there, not believing that he had come in the flesh, they said, “It is his angel.”

An Angel, in the original Greek and Hebrew languages, means a messenger, or one who ministered unto others, as we find it used in Rev. 21. And St. Paul speaking of *angels* says, “Are they not *all* ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” Heb. i, 14. It will here be seen that this is their employment, and their mode of administering may be as various as the necessities of mankind. And in Psalms, “the angel of the Lord,” is said to *tarry* round about them that fear him, and delivereth them, “and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” From these passages it will also be seen that they are employed in watching over, and defending us from all dangers. Yet Mr. Ashley decidedly states, that “angels have never been allowed to descend from their celestial abodes, “except on occasions befitting their dignity,” and specifies those occasions as “worthy their attendance,” as these, viz: The time of our Saviour’s birth; in the garden of Gethsemane; at his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,—from which we reasonably infer that he supposes that angels entirely disregard, ordinarily the affairs of men. And if this is so, let us here ask him, how he can use in sincerity, one of our most beautiful Collects, which, for its sublimity, we will here quote entire: “O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and of men in a wonderful order; mercifully grant, that as thy Holy angels always do Thee service in Heaven, so, by thy appointment, they may *succour* and *defend* us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” Would it not be decidedly inconsistent for us to pray that we might be succoured and defended by angels, if we thought it beneath their dignity to do so? “That they do attend us, and impress us for our good, and guard us from accident and danger,” we have shown to be in strict accordance with Scripture, our own Prayer Book, “and is a belief as old and as universal as the world.”

After indulging in some very undignified remarks against one small feature of modern spiritual manifestations, (which will be further noticed,) he goes on to say, that those "pretended spirits," who produce these manifestations, "do not claim to be angels, therefore they certainly are not—for no holy angel would pretend to be anything but an angel; therefore these *alleged* Spiritual Manifestations *cannot* proceed from them." This is all unreliable logic, (setting aside the doctrine of angels being a separate class of beings,) which cannot be depended on, as we have fully proved. He goes on to say, "they must then, if they be super-natural realities, and not *fictions*, which I neither affirm or deny, they must proceed either from demons or from disembodied human spirits." We have already shown that we believe in evil spirits or demons (as they are erroneously termed,) and we will now proceed to notice his arguments in proof that they cannot proceed from disembodied human spirits.—"These latter," he asserts, "have never been permitted to hold any such converse with the living, as is here pretended, nor any converse at all, except on two or three *very* extraordinary occasions—but on the contrary our Creator, Sovereign and Judge, has expressly forbidden us, under severe penalties, to seek for any communications from them, either by ourselves, or through the medium of those who *pretend* to receive them—and hath inflicted terrible judgments upon those who have sought them,"—and refers us to Lev. 19, 31, 20, 6, and also to Deut. 18, 19 to 24.

We are willing to grant all that can be legitimately claimed for these passages, viz: that they *did* forbid the Jews from "seeking unto those that have familiar spirits," &c.; and what then? Will it follow that it is wrong for us to receive communications from glorified spirits, if God pleases to grant them? But Mr. Ashley says, "that God has never permitted them except," &c., and "therefore they cannot be from disembodied human spirits, because God would never grant what he has forbidden, and therefore they must be from the evil one." This is true; and we think that it is also *equally* true on the other hand, that if he has permitted glorified spirits to communicate with their friends on earth, he has *not* forbidden it; and those who apply these passages to Spiritualism, misapprehend their original design. This throws

us upon proof, and let us look closely into the bearing of these passages upon Spiritual Manifestations. The question with us, is this. Do they forbid *us* from receiving communications from spirits? and not, did they forbid the Jews from consulting familiar spirits and wizards,—for that no one denies. Because a precept *was* given to the Jews, it does not follow that it is *not* binding upon us, for that would annul the greater part of the Old Testament; and vice versa, because a command was given to them, that therefore we are bound to observe it, for this would involve us in some difficulty, in regard to many things, which are strictly enjoined or forbidden—such as eating swines flesh, eating leavened bread on certain days, and offering sacrifices as peace-offerings and sin-offerings, &c, &c. We should “look into the *moral reasons* of these laws, and if they are now the same as then, they are binding upon us, if not, they have passed away, and are of no more force. The bulk of the Jewish law has ceased to be of force. “The prophets or seers among the Jews were numbered by hundreds; some were true and some false; and they became so numerous that statutes were enacted to suppress them. Jer. 11.” Almost every great man among them had his corps of prophets and soothsayers, whom he consulted, as in the case of Ahab—and to consult seers, prophets, wise men, men of God, soothsayers, became a common practice among this people. As a consequence, they became wild with notions they did not understand, and devising new ways to prophesy, they imagined that the secrets of the future were to be obtained by incantations and magic; and all were seeking for a knowledge of the future, in the same spirit that sends so many in our day to consult a fortune teller. Some imagine that they could see peculiar indications in the brains of a calf, or the entrails of an ox, or the lungs of a heifer. This led to the inordinate slaughter of such animals. Some led away by their excitement on the subject, did nothing but consult soothsayers, or necromancers,—and some sought in foreign modes of divination to get the information desired. All these things gave rise to the laws which existed among the Jews, and which have existed among almost all people, against sorcery, divination or witchcraft.—It was therefore right to have such laws; how forcible are the reasons of this command upon *them*, and how evident that it is wholly inapplicable to us. The teaching of Christs’ actions

are as binding upon us as his words, and so much of the Jewish law as he disregarded we may consider as repealed, and of no more binding force. It is a *fact*, recorded by three of the Evangelists, that Christ *did* hold intercourse with the righteous and glorified dead. This is decisive on this point.

The Rev. Mr. A. alludes cursorily to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. We avail ourselves of the remarks of a distinguished writer, Prof. S. B. Brittan, whose authority on this, as well as on other passages, are more satisfactory to our minds, than anything we could offer.

He says:

"It should be observed that what is said of the rich man, his brethren and the beggar; including the interview between the former and father Abraham, is not a relation of actual occurrences, but merely a parable; which is a fabulous or allegorical representation, from which some important moral or useful instruction may be derived." This view has been entertained by the most distinguished commentators. The main scope and design of it seems to be, to hint the destruction of the unbelieving Jews, who, though they had Moses and the prophets, did not believe them—nay, would not believe though one (even Jesus) arose from the dead. In the words of another, "This passage, taken with its connection, clearly shows, the possibility of glorified spirits communicating with the living. The first request of the rich man to Abraham was denied, on the plea that it was impossible for Lazarus to come to him. The second petition was that he would send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brethren. This is also denied, and the only reason given for it is, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear *them*." He does not say in the former case, he "*cannot*;" which clearly shows that it was possible for Lazarus to return to earth and warn these persons." "The passage relates to quite a different thing from Spiritual Manifestations. It relates to a literal resurrection of the body. "Though one rose from the dead"—a specific miracle for a specific object,—and the most that can be claimed for it, even constructively, is, that a specific miracle for the conversion of every *five*

persons would be useless—which is true, no doubt. The passage has no reference to communications made from glorified spirits in their disembodied state, but to the return of the spirit to its forsaken body, and its living in, and preaching through it."

Mr. Ashley also refers to the spirit of Samuel, who was sent back to Saul, as he says, "through the sorceries of the Witch of Endor." "For," he continues, "it is not certain that the spirit of Samuel returned at all; but admitting that he did, it makes nothing in favor of modern *necromancy*, (by which inappropriate term he is pleased to designate Spiritualism throughout his discourse,) because it was, in that case, altogether miraculous." "Thus the God of Israel is represented as divinely co-operating with the "sorceries" of the Witch of Endor, by a most unusual and marvellous display of his power, and for what purpose? What, but to give the most signal endorsement to witchcraft, and to deceive the Hebrew king, by causing him to believe that the spirit—*Samuel himself*—was really there, when it was only an *automaton figure* that arrested his attention. Our writer and his brethren are shocked with the "silly platitudes" and "scoffing rhapsodies" of Spiritualists, "but he evidently presumes that this comports with the dignity of the Divine nature, even to produce a mere puppet, to support the pretensions of an old woman, who, according to his notions, was in league with the devil. Is not this straining at the gnat, and swallowing something larger?" He also says, that "admitting that the veritable spirit of the prophet was permitted to assume the venerable aspect of the body in which it once tabernacled," yet "no such instance, so far as we know, had occurred before—none has taken place since, leaving these recent pretensions out of view." After making this unqualified assertion, he refers in the next passage to Moses and Elias, calling them, or it, an apparition, and to the saints who arose from the dead, and appeared unto many, at the crucifixion, which probably escaped his memory while stating that "no such instance had occurred," &c. He must have read the Scriptures in a very cursory manner, not to have found another instance of "a disembodied human spirit manifesting itself to man; what does he make of that portion of Revelation (already referred to,) delivered to John on the isle of

Patmos, when he says, "and I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel, which showed me these things. Then saith he to me, see thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." Here was a disembodied human spirit, one of the old prophets, called an angel—in other words, a messenger of God—sent to deliver to John, and through him to the world, the most important revelations ever made to man since the time of Christ. And yet Mr. Ashley entirely ignores it, in his zeal to disprove the fact that human spirits are ever allowed to return to earth. Here is an instance of a disembodied human spirit of one of the ancient prophets, appearing to John in human shape, "and speaking to him in person."—Such things, Mr. A. apprehends, are not claimed by the *necromancers* of our times. What sheer ignorance is here shown, (we have the charity to suppose it such,) at the same time thinking that it is ignorance without excuse in a clergyman "of a church," to use the beautiful language of another, "which boasts in her ministry some of the purest and brightest lights of this or any preceeding age." We again repeat, what ignorance does this show of not only the claims of Spiritualists—(which he denominates 'necromancers,')—who have always maintained "that departed human beings come back and revisit their friends on earth, by making their presence felt, and revealing their forms," and also of that which is not only occurring at this time in various parts of our country very frequently, but always has occurred from time immemorial, if we can place any confidence in human testimony. Mr. Ashley's knowledge of Spiritualism must be exceedingly limited, if he is not aware of this fact, and yet he "undertakes to give opinions in regard to it, as if it were as familiar to him as household words."

After disposing of the apparation of Moses and Elias, and of the saints who rose from the dead, in a very brief and cursory manner, and after stating that "these instances only prove that God is able to bring back the dead, and saw fit to do so on *two* occasions,"—(here he again loses sight of the account recorded in Revelation, which passage seems to be wholly obliterated from his mind, if it ever existed there)—he

goes on to say, "but they afford no more evidence of this *new fangled* Spiritualism (falsely so called) than they do in favor of Swedenborgianism, or Mormonism, or any other modern invention." We quote this to show the bitter and reckless spirit of this writer. The proofs or authority upon which he bases this unqualified assertion, we will now leave with our readers to decide for themselves.

We have a few more remarks to make in reference to the spiritual visitation of Moses and Elias to our Saviour "on the Mount of Transfiguration." This was not merely "an apparition," but they verily appeared to be there, as the three disciples who were with Jesus believed and testified, "with all the imperishable elements and faculties of their spiritual being." Their object in being there could not have been merely to give him encouragement or information, for this he received from his Father," but it seems to have been intended purposely to give the disciples a glimpse of the glorified state.— "And behold there talked with him, two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory; and spake of his decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Luke ix, 30, 31. From this it appears, (that what the Rev. gentleman affirms, that the Holy Scriptures, which were written by inspiration, and therefore cannot deceive us,) *everywhere* speak of the dead in terms which imply that they have departed from this world, have nothing more to do with its affairs, "having no intercourse at all save of recollection, and of mutual fellowship in and through the church;" is not literally true; for it plainly appears here that Moses and Elias, who had so long departed from earth, were still mingling in deepsympathy with the tide of human affairs, not only aware of the present, but also informed us as to the future. In accordance with this idea, are various other passages, which speak of the redeemed of earth. May not this scene on the Mount have been introduced to typify the privilege of Christs' church in the latter days, and the assistance they should have in their efforts to evangelize the world? And here may we be allowed to entreat the reverend clergy, in the words of another, "to bathe their hearts thoroughly and deeply in the glories of Tabor, ere their pulpits again resound with denunciations against these things, or their people are treated

with a homily on Saul and the Witch of Endor, and the obsolete and repealed statute of Deut. xviii, 10, 11."

In the following extract the Rev. Mr. Ashley sums up the practical bearing of his discourse, which we shall dismiss with a very few remarks:

"There is one other consideration however, which I beg leave to lay distinctly before you, before I proceed to close. I base it upon the hypothesis, without affirming or denying its truth, that these alleged communications with invisible spirits of some sort, are, as is claimed, supernatural realities. If they be created spirits of any kind, angelic, or human, or satanic, then to seek for spiritual comfort, or for instruction in righteousness, or for religious guidance from *them* and their supposed revelations, instead of, or even in conjunction with, the Holy Spirit of God, and His written word, is to do despite to the Spirit of grace; is to impeach the completeness of the revelation which He has given us in the sacred Scriptures—is to call in question the sufficiency of His ministrations and operations in the kingdom of grace—is in fact, to embrace an attempt to establish another gospel than that which we have received from our Christian fathers—another gospel than that which the Son of God came into our world, and into our nature to disclose, and make effectual our salvation—and is to incur the double anathema, not of man, but of God the Holy Ghost—who inspired St. Paul to write these words—"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed! As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed!" (Gal. i, 8, 9.)

Inasmuch then as these alleged spiritual manifestations are either impostures, or delusions, or realities—if impostures, their source is certainly evil—or if delusions, certainly evil—or if supernatural realities, probably evil—inasmuch as, whether they be impostures, or delusions, or realities, or a mixture of all, they can do us no good which is not secured to all Christian believers infallibly, and immutably, and in infinitely larger measure. in the gospel and Church of God—inasmuch as they have already caused many to apos-

tatize from Jesus Christ, away from whom there is no salvation."

We have nothing to say against these conclusions on the hypothesis that the gentleman's views in all respects are infallible. *

On the supposition that there exists angelic and satanic spirits, independant and aside from those which once were human spirits.

On the supposition that God has established exact, and in all respects, definite forms of grace, and that the revelations of God are complete in the Scriptures, and that Mr. Ashley and those only who think with him have found the true import of these revelations; on these suppositions alone we admit his logic and adopt his conclusions.

But it is now time for religionists of all denominations, to pause and reconsider the whole subject, in all its bearings. Would they consult nature *more*, and human authority *less*; would they read the revelations of *science more*, and written revelations *less*, "what truth is," would more surely dawn upon them, and they would no longer worship a *Jewish God*, but would much better comprehend the true attributes of a *Christian's God*. "For," (in the words of a living divine, the venerable Dr. Nott, "who seeks *truth* wherever it is to be found, and proclaims it to the world,") "Truth," says he, "is no less truth when taught by the sunbeams above, or the fossileferous rocks below, than when inscribed on parchment or chiseled in marble."

"All science may be regarded as a revelation from God, and although newly discovered laws, or facts, in nature, may conflict with religious *opinions* or *errors* which have been written on parchment for centuries, they *never* can conflict with religious *truth*. There must be harmony between the words and the works of the Almighty, and wherever they *seem* to conflict, the discord has been invariably produced by the ignorance or wickedness of man."

We have another point to notice, one which carries with it some significance. We allude to the spirit of religious oppo-

nents. Reasonable opponents are always to be respected, but sneering opposition is worthy of no respect whatever.—When a person speaks of Spiritualism as “modern necromancy,” “rude rappings,” “infantine instrumentalities,” &c., &c., it proves nothing but the bad spirit of the speaker, and gives us reason to suspect that he feels the weakness of his own cause.

It may be the fault of our education, but we have always been taught that scoffing was not an *elevated* kind of argument, and not very convincing to the well informed, although it sometimes carries the multitude.

It is wonderful that christians should so far forget themselves as to make use of sneers, in any controversy involving *religious faith*; mere policy should deter them from so doing.

Is it dignified, says the divine, for angels or the spirits of the departed, to return to earth, “to tip tables, and thrum guitars; to spell as school-boys do, only not half so well, by rude rappings—to write such sense or nonsense as human brains and human hands can write?” Was it dignified, retorts an opponent, for the God of heaven to be born in a *manger*, the son of a carpenter, and select for his companions rude and illiterate fishermen, and live on this earth an obscure and persecuted individual for thirty years? Was it dignified for Christ to spit on the clay with which he anointed the eyes of the blind man, recorded in Luke ix, 6? Was Job in a dignified position as described in Job ii, 8?

It would be wiser for all to ask, what is true? What is fact? leaving “dignity” and inappropriateness out of the question. A true philosopher simply asks this; and happy would it be for society, if there were more philosophers and fewer bigots.

We cannot forbear noticing in this connection, the frequent use which is made of the word “Necromancy,” throughout this gentleman’s discourse; not only appearing as its title, but being the term by which he almost invariably denominates Spiritualism. He cannot certainly be aware of the meaning of this word. Its definition is strictly this:—“Fortunetelling or fore-telling future events.” If he con-

siders this word as properly or truly applied to this subject, it is only one of the many indications that he entirely misunderstands it.

The cause of truth demands that we should notice the following extract from the gentleman's discourse: "If they be delusions, they are such as have induced many professing Christians to renounce the faith and fellowship of the gospel and church of Christ, away from whom they cannot be saved—and have already consigned scores, if not hundreds of their victims to the maniac's horrible doom." Here are assertions made purporting to be facts, which must be admitted or disputed. If they are true, it is somewhat remarkable that we have no other knowledge of them than this sermon affords, and the vague rumors of other opponents. We have taken great interest in this subject for several years, and have read almost everything upon it pro and con, and no such knowledge has ever come to us. Delusion! It is as inconsistent to call these phenomena delusions, as it would be to denominate the action of the telegraphic wires a "delusion."

So far "from its consigning *scores*, if not *hundreds* of its victims to the maniac's *horrible doom*," we have never even heard of one person whose insanity could be ascribed to this cause, for its tendency is rather to prevent this, than to produce it. The statistics of our Insane Asylums do not sustain this assertion; and where else should we look for information in this particular? Will Mr. Ashley please inform us from *what source* he derived his knowledge of this *matter*?

At a recent meeting held in Boston, of 41 Superintendents of Insane Asylums, not one word, corroborating this, was mentioned,—yet Spiritualism as a phenomena, was freely discussed—and they decided that this subject demanded much more investigation and consideration than it had hitherto received.

We never knew of an instance of one professing Christian renouncing the faith and fellowship of the gospel of our Saviour, on account of Spiritualism, (and we very much doubt whether such an instance *can be* specified; if so, it would be as great an anomaly as for one who *truly* believes in Christ, to renounce Christianity. There are numbers, (and we know many such,) who are Spiritualists, who have not left the churches to which they belong, but at the same time, they

have *renounced* all sectarianism; believing that Christ never taught it, and that it is only to be found in the creeds of men. Their religion is *founded* on the doctrines which Christ *taught* and *practiced*, and to these they closely adhere, and endeavor to follow. They feel that they have been too long taught from the pulpit, doctrines which are only commandments of men; which like husks, have starved their hungry souls, anxious for that spiritual bread which cometh down from heaven, which Christ so freely dispensed in all his teachings; and they cannot but "hope that soon, very soon, the Church will again occupy the stand which Christ himself ascribed to it, and be able to progress from that point."

So far from Spiritualism being the cause of so *sad* an effect, as Mr. A. ascribes to it, we can truly *affirm*, that it is producing a very different one. "Let the thousands and tens of thousands, who find in it the consolation and repose which their souls have in vain sought in the prevailing theology of the age, answer—and in answering, let the doubter pause, ere he maligns *that* which is but performing his *neglected work*."

And here allow us again to add the authority of the Hon. N. P. Tallmadge, to whom we are greatly indebted, for his clear and lucid views on all matters touching this great and important subject. Speaking of the "Spiritual Manifestations," he says:

"Infidelity is prostrated before them. The sceptic yields to these evidences from beyond the tomb; confesses and recants the great error of his past life; for the first time believes and proclaims the great *truths* of the *Bible*; embraces the sacred volume as the pillow of his hope; and returns most fervent and devout thanks to the Giver of all good for the "manifestations" vouchsafed to the children of men. This is no fancy sketch. I speak of what my own eyes have seen, and my own ears have heard, during the course of my investigations. Behold here is accomplished that for which the church and the religious press have labored in vain; but instead of gratitude and exultation over this great victory, wrought out by these "Spiritual Manifestations," we hear them again and again denounce, and the question is again put, "What good is to come of them?" Can ignorance,

bigotry, superstition, fanaticism go farther? Let justice and honor, let true religion and piety answer the question."

If these "manifestations" are "of men, they will come to naught, but if they be of God, ye cannot overthrow them, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God:" "That they are of men, no one having a decent regard for his own reputation will pretend to assert. The day for the cry of imposture and delusion has gone by. That they are of God,—i. e.—according to God's laws, has been abundantly shown, and no one can doubt who has examined the subject, for they are made in the same manner that similar manifestations were made as recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. "If then they are from God, if they are according to God's laws, and made by God's permission, how great is the responsibility of those who undertake to denounce them; who undertake to set a limit to the power of the Almighty; and to proclaim that there is neither the necessity nor the power for further manifestations or "revelations" to elucidate the truths of the Bible—truths about which mankind cannot agree, and never will agree, until farther light is shed upon them! This responsibility is great here, but it will be greater hereafter—and none will see it and feel it with such *crushing weight* as the clergy who have denounced it; who have caused their people to walk in darkness, when the brightness of these manifestations were shining around them. Let them take *heed to themselves*—and let them rest assured that, though they may stay for a brief season, the mighty torrent of "Spiritualism," which is covering the earth as the waters cover the seas, they will not be able to check it in the world to which they go, but will there be held to an awful accountability! If they had but a small share of practical common sense, they would investigate it, and proclaim it from the pulpit as confirming the truths of the Bible, and as re-affirming the doctrines which Christ taught and practiced. Instead of attempting to resist it, they would "take the tide at its flood," and endeavor to "direct the fury of the storm." If they do not, they will find the foundations of their antagonistic creeds washed from under them, and swept away by the resistless tide which is now setting."