

D. C. Chesnut

SPIRITUALISM ANNIHILATED!

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY THE

REV. WILLIAM T. DWIGHT, D.D.,

IN THE

CHURCH OF THE THIRD PARISH, PORTLAND, ME.,

ON THE EVENING OF

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 1857.

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God.”—DEUT. 29 : 29.

REPORTED IN SHORTHAND BY P. B. TEMPLETON,

AT THE REQUEST OF CERTAIN SPIRITUALISTS.

P R E F A C E .

TO THE READER.—Some little noise having been made in our City concerning an alleged injunction by DR. DWIGHT upon the publication of the accompanying report of his *Discourse* on the subject of "Spiritualism", the Reporter begs leave to state two or three facts and then to let the matter take its course.

First : —The Reporter does not know DR. DWIGHT, never having seen him to his knowledge, except on this one occasion in the pulpit, and he would not now be able to recognize him in the street. He can therefore have no personal motive of disrespect towards him in any way.

Secondly : —The Reporter is not a believer in what is called "Spiritualism," never having considered the phenomena in this, or in any other relation, worthy of a moment's, serious consideration by him. He is not, therefore, in any manner biased by any prejudice in favor of this new doctrine.

Thirdly : —He was educated in the belief of the religious doctrines commonly designated as "Orthodox." His bias, therefore, if any, would naturally be on that side.

Fourthly : —He disclaims all partiality in the exercise of his profession to either one side or the other, knowing nothing and desiring nothing but the faithful discharge of his duty.

Fifthly : —He has learned from one of the deacons of the Doctor's church that the Doctor was utterly *astonished* at the accuracy of the report, and wondered how it could be done ; and that the Doctor's chief objection was to the form of the Title.

Sixthly : —He has learned from another source, which is equally reliable, that the Doctor supposing he had suppressed this publication, was willing to take the very type in which this report was set, for his own publication. The reason for this is for others to judge of.

Seventhly : —He has further learned that the Doctor offered to take seventy-five dollars for his copyright, and, on the payment of that sum, to allow this publication to go on.

Eighthly : —It is a mistake to suppose that any *injunction* has been served by the Doctor upon any party in this matter. The Reporter has been served with a paper stating the simple fact that the Doctor had filed a certain title with the clerk of the U. S. District Court, and the Reporter caused a like notice to be served upon the Doctor that he (the Reporter) had also filed another title, which title was filed SIX DAYS previous to that of Dr. Dwight's.

Ninthly : —The Reporter stands upon his rights in this matter, in defence of his profession and of the liberty of the press. When reporters can be prevented from reporting the proceedings of legislative bodies, and of law courts, they can be excluded from our churches. The rule of the *London Times*, and of the British Press generally, is not to allow any man to see beforehand their reports of speeches until they are seen in print, and that rule has been sustained.

Tenthly : —As at present advised, *priority of deposit of title* in the proper quarter is all that can be required, unless it can be shown that the thing claimed has been clandestinely obtained. If the reporter had entered the Doctor's dwelling and *stolen* the manuscript, there would be just cause of action : but the reporter merely claims in this instance that he has put in a permanent and tangible form what was previously made common to all the world if it could have been possible for all the world to be present.

Finally : —The Reporter again disclaims all purpose of disrespect, and begs it to be distinctly understood that he desires to assume all the responsibility of his action in this matter. The reasoning of the above remarks may be condensed as follows :—

If there be anything wrong on the part of the reporter it must have originated either in *bad motive* or in *ignorance* or *want of skill* in his occupation.

But he has shown that *no reason can exist for a bad motive*, but, on the contrary, some reasons for a good one.

He has also shown that *want of skill* cannot be charged, because the skill has been *admitted* by Dr. Dwight, and will be attested by the thousand witnesses who heard the discourse and will read this report of it.

The public will draw its own conclusion.

S E R M O N.

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God.” — *Deuteronomy*, 29; 29.

THIS declaration is the announcement of a principle which every reflecting mind discerns to be true and important. It was made by Moses nearly three thousand five hundred years ago, and the devout Israelite of his day must have immediately perceived its justice. The idea must have seemed as unfounded to him as to ourselves that God has ever revealed himself fully and completely to his creatures, or that it is possible for man, or for the very loftiest of creatures wholly to comprehend his Creator. The great law-giver of Israel has not announced, then, my friends, a truth which had been previously unknown or utterly obscure, and which we may term an original revelation as it is here uttered. Moses affirmed it, as the Bible affirms numberless other truths and principles which we read in its pages, not to enlighten our otherwise inevitable ignorance, but to prevent our overlooking what we might otherwise either wilfully or carelessly disregard. This indeed is the case with the entire system of what we properly term “Natural Religion.” The being and character of God, the duties which we owe to Him and to each other, are rendered sufficiently evident by Creation and Providence, and the teachings of conscience. The revelation of these which the Old Testament contains, was made to men not because of their incapacity but because of their unwillingness to make a constant discovery for themselves.

“The secret things” is the affirmation “belong unto the Lord our God.” A distinction is thus made, as every one perceives, between certain things which are secret and certain other things which are not secret, or which Moses terms, in the sentence which follows,

“the things which are revealed.” The latter, as he proceeds to say, “belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” In more general language, my friends, what God has made known to man, either in his works or in his Word, is intended by him for our study, our guidance, our benefit. It is not only proper but a *duty* that we should acquire to a very considerable extent the knowledge thus placed within our attainment, for we should be otherwise neither fitted to serve him nor to secure our own highest welfare. But in distinction from this “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God.” In other words, God has properly confined the knowledge of those things to himself. This is the reason why they are secret — or why they have not been revealed. They belong to him — not to man — not to creatures. They furnish, accordingly, no rule, no motive for our conduct in any case whatever. We cannot discover them. It is alike irreligious and fruitless on our part to seek to know them.

With this brief introduction I shall proceed to notice the subject which the passage suggests — the secret things as belonging to God.

The first idea which it properly presents, my friends, is the fact that there are such things. The text asserts that there are secret things, and that there are revealed things; or, in different language, that God reveals some things to men, and that other things which are not revealed are secret with him—known only by him, belonging, pertaining to him exclusively. What these things are, in what general class they are included we shall soon notice. We are now simply noticing the fact that they exist, and this fact is here distinctly affirmed. “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,” as is declared in the 25th chapter of the book of Proverbs. To conceal, to keep secret many things is thus proclaimed to be one element of his glory, one exhibition of his perfection, without which he would not be God. Truly is a similar ascription made in the 45th chapter of Isaiah: “Verily, thou art a God and hidest thyself.” God needs so to hide himself — to conceal himself from the view of man behind his works; and who can penetrate the mysterious veil? Similar is the language in the 145th Psalm: “Great is the Lord, and his greatness is unsearchable;” and Paul

repeats, with greater power the same idea in the 11th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, when he asks, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? How unsearchable his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" I need not say that such passages represent the general tenor of the Bible. God's government of this world consisting in his unchangeable purposes which respect all events, and also in their execution, is described as known only to himself except so far as he reveals it in some instances in prophecies, and then gradually in his providence. This is itself a universal affirmation of a fact. God's government respects everything, and he keeps us in ignorance. — He keeps absolutely secret within himself what he intends to do, and also what he is constantly doing. The fact of our own ignorance also is certain proof that there are secret things with God. How little do we know of what is constantly taking place in the world in any one moment even by our very sides! How little shall we ever know of what is thus unknown! We are also in utter ignorance of futurity, or of what is now taking place in any other quarter of the universe, or any other world. It is also certain that it is God's intention to keep us and this world in a state of ignorance — an ignorance inevitable, absolutely, so long as we live on this earth. We only vary the form of affirmation when we say that he has designed that these things should be all secret with himself. They are actually secret with him.

I shall next proceed to specify the other general thought—some of the things which are secret with God. These must be denoted generally, referring to them only by their kind or class, the nature of the case excluding all particular mention or reference. I would then say that every thing directly connected with the nature of God himself, and his personal agency, is thus secret exclusively with him. When Zophar exclaims, in the 11th chapter of the Book of Job, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" he said what, although he was uninspired, we at once receive as absolutely just. God's spiritual essence, his self-existence, his eternity, his Omnipotence and Omniscience, and his infinite moral per-

fections—these are not only subjects, but they involve facts and realities directly concerning himself which we are as incapable of knowing as is the insect. The arch-angel can as little comprehend them : they are all secret things of God. Nay, just as incapable are we of understanding the mysteries of our own existence. It is as entirely the secret of God what the nature of spirit is, what the nature of matter is, and how spirit and matter in the form of the human body are united so as to constitute one conscious being—as truly hidden from us, and probably from the most lofty of finite minds, as God's own infinite agencies. Whence comes vegetable life? What is conscious being in man, and whence comes it? how the soul begins to exist; how God so influences sinful man that, without affecting his free agency, he voluntarily becomes holy—each of these, among the innumerable subjects of God's agencies, is one of his secrets. He has not intended that we should discover it, and we cannot discover it. In every change which we behold in the natural or the moral world we can advance a certain distance of the way, whether its progress be either receding towards the beginning or moving towards the final result; but we must then invariably stop; for we see a boundary which we cannot pass, while the work—the agency—is still going steadily on. Now on the other side of that boundary God is there acting. If we could pass over it we should see the great workman immediately busy at his work. Daring to pass over that boundary, my hearers, let Gabriel at the same moment try to pass over it, then let a silk worm or a fly also pass over it, and the fly will pass over it, and will there behold its work just as soon as will you or will the angel.

Among these secret things are also to be included the purposes of God. That God has purposes, that he has formed them from eternity, and that they relate, in some form or other, to all events, the Scriptures fully inform us. I have already necessarily alluded to them; and we perceive that they are and must be seen and known by himself only until they are announced in the gradual unfolding of his purposes. “He worketh all things”—as the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians declares—“He worketh all things after the counsel of his will.” But who can discover

what that "counsel of his will" is? God takes counsel with none of his creatures. In the depth of his own infinity does he purpose what and whom he would create; and how he would govern his creatures; and what the great eternal result should be; and we, in the exercise of our own freedom, act or refrain from acting; we in our presumption may strive to penetrate these unfathomable depths, or, in child-like trust, cheerfully await the disclosures of his providence; but, in either case, what was then secret with Him at the beginning is still secret now — hidden alike from earth, heaven and the universe. When we shall be able by any possibility to discover God's purposes, then we shall be able to frustrate those purposes, and to share with Him the supremacy of His throne. The future — and by this term is intended the persons and the events belonging to all coming time — is also secret with God. This specification is in one respect similar to the last, for the purposes of God, which have not been already accomplished, respect the future. Could we then know the one we should of course know the other. A proper elucidation of the subject requires its distinct application to the future, to that future universally contra distinguished from the past and the present. Much of the present, and still more of the past may become known to us, and is actually known to very many persons; but who knows the future? What sage now living — wiser ten fold than Solomon if we may suppose such — can predict what will certainly occur to-morrow or the next hour, except so far as prophecy imparts its glimmering rays? He may conjecture many things very wisely; he may be so profoundly familiar with what we term human nature, that his presages may seem to be predictions; still, aside from the Word of God, he knows nothing, whether the central fires that have been ever raging within the earth, may not burst forth before to-morrow's sun, and consume our race and all the vestiges of humanity. Let all this world's science and acuteness labor in concert to discover whether this day next year will be clear or cloudy at the Cape of Good Hope, or whether, in the morning of that day, a robin will perch on the tree that fronts my own door, and the labor would be as hopeless as that of a little child to create a world.

I would add that the state of the invisible world is absolutely secret with God. By such language, I do not intend the planetary and starry orbs, but what we often term the world of spirits. In giving to man the capacity to invent the telescope and discover the science of mathematics, and make rapid attainments in the arts, God has made known to us much which is knowledge as distinct from conjecture respecting the material world around us, immense and immeasurable as is the distance; but the world of spirits—and I include heaven and hell—their respective localities, so far as they have localities, the actual condition of departed persons individually, and all intercommunications with such persons, or with the dead universally—all this, excepting the few and general revelations contained in the Scriptures, is entirely hidden from men. While we inhabit the body and are thus filling up our probation, and preparing ourselves, each for his own unchangeable state hereafter, God has determined that we shall possess just so much knowledge of the world of spirits as can be acquired from his own announcements by inspired prophets and apostles, and the Savior of men, and he has also determined that we shall possess no other knowledge. The fact that he has revealed to us in the Bible what we thus actually know respecting the invisible world and its inhabitants is in itself decisive evidence that he purposed we should know nothing additional. What he has thus revealed to us he has declared for our benefit; what he has not thus revealed he has withheld for the same reason; and as it is his prerogative to make this revelation, as he asserts this of himself and of the Lord Jesus Christ as representing himself exclusively, no additional information can be imparted to man, except by His or by Christ's appointment. Independent of the evident impossibility of our acquiring any such knowledge, any more than we can obtain a knowledge of the inhabitants of the fixed star Sirius, or of those who occupy the nebulae in the belt of the constellation Orion, which shines at a distance so great that a beam of light shooting two hundred thousand miles a second, could not pass over that distance to reach this earth in less than sixty thousand years—independent, I say, of this evident impossibility, we know that God, as the Infinite Ruler, who has given the Bible to man, and Christ as the crowned mediator, who now

rules directly the world of spirits, will permit no such knowledge to be communicated from any other source. Christ himself proclaimed immediately before his ascension, that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth ; and in the first chapter of the book of Revelations, he affirms that he has the keys of hell—that is, the Greek word being rightly translated, the keys of *hades*, of the world of departed spirits, and of death. No one then can leave that world : none can convey any intelligence from that world to this, whether good angels or fallen angels—whether spirits of just men made perfect, or lost spirits—but by Christ's appointment. He has also said in the last chapter of Revelations, that if any man shall add to the words of the prophecy of that book, God will add unto him the plagues which are written in that book, thus assuring us that the account which he gives of the world unseen, was in itself complete, and that no further revelations were to be anticipated.

I am here addressing myself, it will be understood, to those who receive the Bible as God's word. I am not addressing those who, knowing as little as children the overwhelming evidence which establishes its divine origin, are staggered by a few objections that have been a hundred times refuted, and therefore deny its authority.

In affirming, then, that the state of the invisible world is an absolutely secret thing with God, and in observing that as one proof of this, God has determined that man, while on earth, shall possess no knowledge of that kind additional to the revelations now made in the Bible respecting it, I would further say, that Christ has distinctly asserted this in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. I term this narrative a parable ; but whether it is a parable or an account of actual facts, the principles it affirms are the same. The rich man was in torment in the world of spirits, and entreated Abraham that Lazarus might be sent back to this world to warn his brethren to shun the sensual and irreligious course which had ended in his own ruin. Christ thus represents Abraham as replying, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." Then the rich man replied, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." But

his request is finally refused by the declaration that if these brothers would not listen to Moses and the prophets, a messenger from the world of spirits would have no power to persuade them. Christ has thus declared that the writings of the Old Testament—and far more positively does he affirm this of the entire Bible—that these writings are all that was needed for the attainment of their salvation; that a departed spirit, were he to appear again on earth, could not benefit those whom he might visit and warn, and that no communication from the world of spirits to men would accordingly be believed. This is proclaimed, I repeat it, by Him who has the keys of the unseen world, who openeth, and no man shutteth, who shutteth, and no man openeth.

A single other reference is all that can be made here. When we are informed by the Apostle Paul of his having been caught up into Paradise, he tells us that he heard unspeakable words which it was not lawful for him to utter—which he could not rightfully utter. If Paul was not suffered to communicate with man any intelligence of the spirit world, we can be assured that its gates are barred against the egress of any bad messenger.

We have, then, my friends, been establishing the truth that there are secret things with God. They are secret because he has not revealed them to man; and it is because it is his purpose not to reveal them that the Christian dispensation is continued. Some of these things are in their very natures—I intend those connected with the being of God—incapable of being known to us. They must be unknown to all but God himself forever. Others are made secret now that may be revealed hereafter; but while thus unrevealed they are as absolutely secret to us as God's self-existence. They are, therefore, absolutely barred against our approach. All effort to lift the curtain which hides them like thickest midnight from our gaze, is as presumptuous as it is idle.

We have also seen that among these secret things is the invisible world—or as we more mysteriously and solemnly term it, the world of spirits. The world of spirits! Who has formed that world and conducted thither the unnumbered millions that once sojourned in the body here on earth? Who has fixed their endless state, and made them companions of one another in bliss or in

woe on different shores of the great impassable gulf? He with whom are the secret things.

The subject which has been investigated I have selected from its direct relation to what is now popularly termed "Spiritualism." All present will understand me to intend that mode of professed intercourse with spiritual beings which many suppose has been lately discovered, and in which, as they also believe, inquiries may be made through the agency of some one or more individuals usually called mediums. Inquiries may be made of departed spirits on almost every variety of subject, and direct answers imparting the desired knowledge may generally be speedily obtained. The account which I have thus given, although not including all that is sometimes intended by the word is sufficiently comprehensive and definite. I would say here at the beginning that I have hesitated much before deciding to introduce such a subject into the pulpit. In itself it has no claim to such a notice. As one among very many popular delusions, it might and ought so far as the sanctuary is concerned, to be overlooked in common with fortune-telling and with oriental jugglery. The mental philosopher may find here some occasion for his researches ; but the minister of Christ, when speaking from the pulpit — *none*. It is, then, the religious aspect of the subject only which can justify its introduction into this sacred place ; and no particular subject which is in its nature hostile to the religion of Christ, and which is actually working injury to his cause on earth, should be wholly overlooked by his ministers. This is my apology — my justification for the notice I shall now proceed to take of what is often, though erroneously, called spiritualism. Let me add that I studiously abstain from every personal allusion, and shall treat the subject with entire plainness—speaking my own sentiments without disguise. Every minister of Christ as truly as Paul when speaking of himself in the first chapter of the Phillipians, is set for the defense of the Gospel ; and when he blows the trumpet he is not from timidity or false delicacy to cause it to give an uncertain sound. If he shrinks at any time from exposing any form of heresy or delusion, he is unworthy of the commission which he bears.

What, then, are the pretensions of spiritualism? What does

it profess to be? (It professes to hold constant and direct intercourse with the invisible world, or with the region of departed spirits, so that such spirits can at almost any time be brought into immediate communication with any persons who desire it.) All such spirits can thus be summoned mediately or immediately. Not only the deceased relatives and friends of the persons present who make the inquiries, but any and all others whenever and wherever they have once lived on earth. Whatever were their character, whatever their situation and employment, now a christian who has died in the Lord, and reputable men of the world with murderers, drunkards and harlots, who have not died in the Lord,—all may be thus summoned. Primitive martyrs and christian apostles may be thus summoned. Ancient prophets and patriarchs may be thus summoned. Paul from the christians, and Moses from the Jewish, and Abraham from the patriarchal dispensations, may be thus summoned and catechised respecting themselves and any other departed spirits, and the world in which they dwell, and they may be ordinarily expected to impart the desired information. Nay, more than this—in Europe already we are informed again—and we know not how soon it will be repeated here—the blasphemy says that the Lord Jesus Christ is also summoned and that he gives the information which, when catechised, is expected from him. Intelligence may be also thus professedly obtained concerning almost every subject of inquiry affecting the questioner's earthly interest, always excepting whatever involves real science, acute discrimination or sound practical knowledge, nothing of which, or the semblance of which is imparted. Thus the spirits of the dead may be summoned at any time to inform the questioner what has been lost or misplaced about the house, or somewhere else, in order that it may be found; whether certain absent friends are living or dead; if the former, whether they will ever return, and, if the latter, when, where and how they died; what one friend said to another long since which has been ever since kept secret by the survivor; the husband or the wife lately deceased may be thus summoned to comfort the survivor and, in due time, to approve of the survivor's speedy marriage. There is, I repeat it, no subject of inquiry that can be named in which the

needed intelligence cannot ordinarily be sooner or later thus received, still always excepting everything involving true science, acute discrimination, or important practical knowledge. The departed spirits of philosophers and statesmen—the minds through whose labors on earth our race has been made wiser and better, may not only be recalled to earth, but even the spirits of the bad may be thus brought again to gratify the curiosity of the intelligent and reputable inquirer as well as that of the scoffer, the atheist, the libertine and the sot. Such are the *pretensions* of spiritualism.

What is its machinery? Or how is this mysterious intercourse with the spirits of the dead maintained? At whose bidding do the awful portals of Eternity open, that the departed may, for a season, revisit this earth? Some one individual, who is termed a medium, sometimes possessing and sometimes not possessing common capacities and intelligence becomes, through some power peculiar to such persons, a channel or medium of communication with spirits, and their answers to the questions proposed are given in the medium's own unconscious writing them down on the spot, or in rappings, or knockings, or movements of tables. The medium sometimes becomes what is called entranced, and, in some instances in this region, one advance has been made. The medium is actuated as if seemingly possessed by a good spirit, and then subsequently as if possessed by a demoniac spirit. Such is the machinery or mode of intercourse with departed spirits, now familiarly professed throughout the land. I mean, my friends, and all present are aware, that this machinery is thus set in motion, and it is more difficult to say where it is not than where it is; or, in other words, that these professed communications from departed spirits are now made in our cities and villages wherever any one can be found to act as a medium, and others are willing to receive them. Crowds assemble on the Sabbath, some of whom have been accustomed reverently to frequent the sanctuary, thus to pass the hours with christians and to spend in the worship of Jehovah those hours which are now devoted to the public exhibitions of spiritualism, which, like those of a theater or traveling menagerie are now not unfrequently made to spectators who will pay the professor a shilling or sixpence a head. Such we say, once more, is Spiritualism; such

are its revelations ; such is the machinery or mode of obtaining it. Let us now inquire what is the judgment which the word of God pronounces upon it, and all its pretensions. It is that, I say, of condemnation only. The secret things, as the teachings of the Bible, and of enlightened reason, which is always in harmony with the Bible, have already fully shown to us, belong to God. It is his prerogative, as our creator and moral governor, to prescribe limits to our knowledge — limits which it is impossible for us to pass, either because he has withheld from us the capacity or denied us the opportunity of investigation. And among these secret things none, as we have seen, is more evidently to be numbered than the state of the world of spirits. God has withdrawn it beyond all possibility of our approach. He has interposed between these inhabitants and ourselves the midnight of the shadow of death; and Christ, who is the Lord of its mysterious realms, holds in his own hand the eternal keys. Any attempt, then, which the spiritualist makes to pry into the secrets of that awful world, is an attempt to open what God has shut. It is, however little as he may so deem it, virtually discarding and treading under foot the actual revelations of that word which God has given to man in his word of revelation uttered by prophets, by the Saviour of mankind and his apostles, and substituting for them, as far better, the contemptible responses of spirit rappings, and knockings, and writings, and tippings of tables. The vast curtain which God has hung between this world and the world of spirits, so high that not a ray of light can shoot over it, so dense that all earth's mountains could not more utterly hide what lies beyond it, and one corner of which he has been pleased to raise so far as we can bear to view beyond — the spiritual theorist would cut and tear if possible into a thousand shreds ; and as this is impossible, he soon begins to doubt and then to deny that there is any heaven or hell, such as those of the Bible, lying beyond that curtain. The very desire, then, to unfold the secrets of that mysterious world if but once acted out in the machinery of spiritualism, is a profane entrance into God's most inmost sanctuary ; and thus, in the language of the poet,

“ Fools rush where angels fear to tread.”

The individual may not be always conscious of this. It may partially, and for a time, be only a season of ignorance ; but it will soon become and *must* soon become a season of consciousness. No man reads the word of God who knows not that it describes the unseen world as absolutely closed up, barred, sealed against all intercourse—all communication with this world of living men. He who professes to believe the Bible, cannot accordingly endeavor, through the aid of spiritualism, to open such communication without being soon aware that he acts in direct opposition to God's revealed will. The spirits—you may call them by the names of departed men or whatever else you please—are consulted by him through a medium with the avowed object or purpose of discovering what God is. And this is, whatever palliative words he may use, contending with God. But this is not all. No person can become a votary of spiritualism, and be familiar with its practices and mummeries who does not necessarily but speedily renounce the Bible and the God of the Bible. If these spirits—be they angels or demons of the souls of the departed, can and do thus actually reveal the secrets of the unseen world, of what use, then, is that book which we call the Bible? This is the very question which every such person in effect asks, and he almost invariably gives the same answer. I say that he speedily as well as invariably gives it, because spiritualism cannot be divested of its essentially hostile character to the religion of Jesus Christ. Each of the two professes to introduce us mediately into the amazing realities of the world unseen. The christian religion suffers not the intrusion of any other so-called faith for a single moment—as little that of spiritualism as of Mohammedanism. Just as consistently may the Jupiter of old Greece and Rome be worshiped in harmony with the only true God, and with Jesus Christ whom he has sent, as the silly revelations of spirits and mediums be credited by the believer in the only invaluable Book.

As has been previously said, the individual who is beginning to lean towards this delusion, is soon consciously aware—struggle against it as he may—that there is as little fellowship between the two as between midnight and noon. If he then with some occasional misgivings begin to confer with the spirits, even as to

what holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, brief indeed will be the interval before he will be prepared to say that the religion, or rather the *no-religion* of spiritualism would be preferable to the religion of Christ. Just as rapidly as the individual, whether man or woman, comes to this decision, so rapidly does he or she decide that the Sabbath has little if any sanctity; that prayer in the scriptural sense is unmeaning; that sin except in the form of flagrant crime, is of little moment; that holiness is an empty name, and that the salvation of Jesus Christ and the need of Him, is but a cunningly devised fable, unworthy of serious contemplation. In some cases, the restraints of religious training may prevent this; but in how many will it be inevitable. These very practices, my friends, under other names, are sternly rebuked and condemned in the Old Testament. The book of Deuteronomy, in the 18th chapter, affirms that an enchanter, a wizard, a consulter with familiar spirits, and a necromancer are an abomination to the Lord. The original word here translated "necromancer," means literally the spirits of the dead; and as used in this passage, means those imposters who among the Israelites, pretended they were able to summon back departed spirits, and thus to reveal a knowledge of the future. The meaning exactly expressed in the word "necromancer," is clear, and it is to the same chapter that the prophet Isaiah refers the king of Judah when in a season of great peril from foreign conquest; and the monarch himself was tempted, just as Saul the predecessor of king David had been tempted, to ask for a knowledge of the future by this unhallowed agency. He, and the nation are accordingly addressed thus by the Most High, speaking by the voice of the prophet: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"

It was the custom of these ancient necromancers to speak in the tones of modern ventriloquism, to give solemnity to their pretended revelations when they invoke the spirits of the dead. Instead of such profane consultations the prophet asks, "Should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead?" As if he had said "shall we go in behalf of the living to consult the dead?"

They who did this were by God's own appointment, as the Pentateuch informs us, to be capitally punished as traitors to God himself, the civil and religious sovereign of the Israelites. That punishment indeed, rightful and necessary, long since ceased with the final overthrow of idolatry among the Jewish people, but has the sin ceased?

Few of the believers in spiritualism are aware how largely the magical practices of ancient Greece consisted of pretended intercourse with departed spirits. The same practice, and resting on the same foundations, prevailed extensively over the heathen world. The ancient heathen poets from Homer downwards, described with more or less particularity the ceremonies to be used in worshipping the spirits of dead. These were dismally solemn, and were viewed with great dread by all concerned. Modern spiritualism has directly inverted the character of these ceremonies. They are now an occasion for nervous excitement, and then for wonder, and then for sport. They are first a puzzle and then a show.

This, then, my friends, is the sentence which the word of God pronounces on spiritualism — that of condemnation as destitute of any religious character. Were these rappings, and knockings, and table turnings, and all these other marvels and noises, and sights and mummeries simply presented for investigation like the feats of the conjurer, or as a problem in Natural Philosophy, we should characterize them in different language; but its essential excellencies, as its votaries affirm, relate to man's eternal state, in the light which it casts on those momentous interests compared with which all that appertains to earth and time is a shadow. When thus contemplated it is not hyperbole but literal verity when I affirm its spirit to be anti-Christian and heathenish. What deity does the spiritualist worship? To whom is prayer professedly offered? To whom are hymns addressed in songs of praise? From whom come the so-called revelations then uttered? Not to the Jehovah of the Bible, for spiritualism disowns his authority over the world of spirits; not from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sword of the spirit, which is his powerful word, cuts down, root and branch, all these pretended revelations. Another deity is worshipped, a deity whose name has never yet been heard of in

heaven or in hell — a deity whom the universe knows not is the god of spiritualism.

I cannot close this course of remark without observing that spiritualism is equally condemned by enlightened reason. This, as has been already observed, is always in harmony with the word of God. Were there no other reason for such condemnation this would be complete. The childishness, the contemptibleness of its professed revelations! Unseen spirits, as I have said before, to tell where something that has been lost or misplaced may be found! to *guess* whether absent friends are living or dead! — guessing sometimes right and sometimes wrong — to tell about secret conversations between two persons! and what are certain persons' names who are absent! to inform you what you are thinking about, and then to describe the world of spirits, and how spirits there reside, and what they are doing!! I say I speak a literal verity when affirming that in all the published volumes of these pretended revelations there is not one original valuable thought; not one important truth has been added to the stock of human knowledge. Their descriptions of the unseen world and of the state of the departed have been either stolen from works lately published, such as the Paradise of Dante, or from Emanuel Swedenborg, with his seven spheres; or, if original, they are just fit to fill the pages of a third rate novel. One page of the vigorous practical sense of Benjamin Franklin, one proverb of king Solomon outweighs in value all their revelations. The mind that feeds on such aliment will ultimately become either half crazed or wholly crazed, as many have already become, as the newspapers repeatedly inform us, or else as little fitted to distinguish between truth and falsehood as a little child.

The character of the meetings where their revelations are made calls for the same condemnation. Scores, and I suppose sometimes hundreds are collected, some, as has just been said, to laugh at it all; some timid, half-frantic it may be, before it is through, from nervous excitement, and some there may be, who have been persuaded into fully believing; and soon, a young female it may be, or a middle aged man, is ready to act as a medium, who perhaps seems to compose himself or herself into what is called a

trance, and then raps and knocks and table-movings denote that the world of spirits is in free communication with any who may propose questions. The answers are then given or the medium writes it down. Laughter, wonder, fear are all active ; and these are the revelations, this the worship, this the religion of spiritualism !

Let us suppose that such meetings and such a religion were to become general throughout New England (and they will become so when the granite of the White Mountains is sunk ten thousand fathoms deep ;) but we will suppose they have actually so become. As indispensable to this is it that the four thousand temples consecrated to the God of the Bible must have been first closed ; the Saviour whom that Bible reveals must have given place as the great Teacher of mankind to Andrew Jackson Davis, J. W. Edmonds, and Robert Hare, and the Bible itself become an obsolete book except to a few superannuated believers. All that has made the land of the Pilgrims free and enlightened, virtuous, pious and glorious, having thus departed, spiritualism as the new and better religion, will hold its worship and flood our hills and plains with its revelations. Entranced mediums and lecturers will be the great lights of the New England mind ; and with such teachers what will speedily become the mass of the people ? How long ! how long, think you, my friends, before, as the inevitable result, what would then be called the religion of New England would have sunk below the superstition and bigotry of Romanism, down to the level of the Boodhism of China and the Brahmanism of Hindostan ?

But is there nothing extraordinary — nothing independent of human agency—nothing supernatural in spiritualism ? With all its magnificent pretensions has it no secrets which are undiscoverable ? If secrets which are not yet discovered, are evidence of supernatural agency, then the mysterious sounds and noises which Southey the poet describes as having been heard in the nursery of John Wesley, and which disturbed his parents and defied every attempt to detect their origin—these, then, must have been supernatural. Then the Egyptian conjurer who professes to bring up, and as Laing says do seemingly bring up the forms of the departed—then they exercise supernatural power. Then the Hindoo jug-

glers, who, as the missionary Ward informs us — himself an eye-witness in broad daylight — with his machinery working marvels, and professed miracles, as all will pronounce who read the writings of this respectable writer — the Hindoo jugglers, I say, may be said to possess supernatural powers. But there is something, I answer, constantly operating in all the manipulations and machinery of spiritualism, in addition to all the trickery and all the credulity, both of which, as there is reason to believe, exist without limit. This is what is termed mesmerism, animal magnetism — influences in some respects resembling electricity, in others unlike it, and independent of it — an influence or element partly physical (I mean by this, natural) and partly animal or pertaining to the human body, in which in different persons it exists in a very unequal degree. Its operations have been partly known for two-thirds of a century; but of its nature and operations as yet but little comparatively is understood. But there is great reason for believing that the pretended wonders of ancient magic and necromancy, with the trickery of conjurers and other impostors, have been largely built on the operations of this natural agent. It explains all the mysteries of spiritualism. The so-called trances, the pretended revelations, the noises and movements of every description — this is the reservoir from which these marvels, as I believe, are all supplied, and unseen spirits, practically, are as guiltless of directing them or co-operating in them as unborn babes. This, as I doubt not, is all. Neither good angels — for they would scorn and loathe the whole matter — nor bad angels (for God will not suffer them thus mediately to act in the affairs of men) nor departed saints (for they are at rest and in transport in the presence of their Saviour) nor lost spirits (for they are shut up in prison) — none of them are active here. It is all earthly — all, except as explained on such principles, a delusion — all to be shunned; and if any have been thoughtlessly induced — as doubtless many have been — to participate in it, to be at once and finally renounced.

May the Lord bless his word for Christ's sake, AMEN.