

*A R. Mitchell*

---

16.10.4

2102

---

A  
DISCOURSE  
ON  
SPIRITUALISM,  
BY  
WILLIAM T. DWIGHT, D. D.

---







A  
DISCOURSE  
ON  
SPIRITUALISM,

DELIVERED IN THE  
THIRD PARISH CHURCH,

PORTLAND, APRIL 26, 1857,

BY  
WILLIAM T. DWIGHT, D. D.



PORTLAND:  
PUBLISHED BY SANBORN & CARTER,  
1857.



---

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857,

By WILLIAM T. DWIGHT,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Maine.

---

David Tucker, Printer.



## DISCOURSE.

---

DEUTERONOMY XXIX. 29—"THE SECRET THINGS BELONG UNTO  
THE LORD OUR GOD."

This declaration is the announcement of a principle, which every reflecting man discerns to be true and important. It was made by Moses nearly thirty-five centuries ago, and a devout Israelite of his day must have immediately perceived its justness. The idea must have seemed as unfounded to him as to ourselves, that God has ever revealed Himself fully, completely, to His creatures ; or that it is possible for man, or for the very loftiest of creatures, wholly to comprehend the Creator. The great lawgiver of Israel has not then announced a truth which had been previously unknown, or obscure, and which we may therefore term an original revelation as it is here uttered. He affirmed it, as the Bible affirms numberless other truths and principles which we read on 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, and 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 of their unwillingness, to make the 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 next sentence, the “things which are revealed.” The latter, as he proceeds to say, “belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” In more general language, what God has made known to men, 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 shall be otherwise never fitted to serve Him, nor to secure our own highest welfare. But in distinction from these, “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God.” In other words, He has purposely confined the knowledge of these things to Himself. This is the reason why they are secret, or why they have not been revealed: “they belong to Him,” and not to men, 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 : SECRET THINGS, AS BELONGING SOLELY TO GOD. The first idea which it appropriately presents 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 or pertaining to Him exclusively. What these things are, or in what classes they are included, we shall soon notice : we are now simply noticing the fact that they exist, and this fact is here directly affirmed. "It is the glory of God," is the declaration in Prov. xxv. 2, to "conceal a matter:" to conceal, or keep secret, is affirmed to be one element of His glory, one exhibition of His perfections. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," is the ascription to the Most High in Isai. 45, 15 : it is not only the prerogative, but the choice, of God to hide Himself, or to withhold from His creatures in many respects the knowledge of His nature and His operations. Similar is the language in Ps. 145, 3. "Great is the Lord, His greatness is unsearchable:" and Paul repeats with greater power the same idea in Rom. 11, 34. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor ! How unsearchable are 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 constant execution, is described as known only to Himself ; except so far as He reveals it in some few instances in prophecy, and then gradu-



ally in His providence. This is in itself a universal affirmation of the Fact: God's government respects every thing; and He keeps us in ignorance, He keeps absolutely secret with Himself what He intends to do, and most of what He is constantly doing.

The fact of our own ignorance is also certain proof of the Fact that there are these Secret things with God. How little do we know of what is constantly taking place in this world at any one moment, even by our very side? How little shall we ever know of what is thus unknown? We are also in utter ignorance of futurity, and of what is now taking place in any other quarter of the universe or in any other world. It has been also, as we see with perfect certainty, God's intention to keep ourselves and our whole race in this very state of ignorance,—an ignorance inevitable and absolute so long as we live on the earth. He has designed, we only vary the form of affirmation, that these things should be all secret things with Himself; they are actually secrets with Him.

I shall next proceed to *specify some of the Things* which are secret with God. These must be named generally, referring to them only by their kinds or classes, 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 with his immediate Agency, is thus secret exclusively with him. When Zophar exclaims in Job 11, 78. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst



thou know ?" he said what, although he was uninspired, we at once perceive to be absolutely just. God's spiritual essence, His self-existence, His eternity, His omnipotence and omniscience, and His infinite moral perfections ;—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 archangel 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 a 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 but one conscious being.—As utterly hidden from us, and probably from the loftiest finite minds, is the whole subject of God's immediate Agency. How the seed germinates within the earth, whence comes vegetable life, what is conscious being in man and whence comes it, how the soul begins to exist, how God influences sinful man so that without affecting his free agency he voluntarily becomes holy ;—each of these and innumerable other subjects of God's agency, is one of His secrets, He has not intended that we should discover it, and we cannot discover it. In every change that we behold in the natural or moral world, we can move some distance as we watch its progress, either receding towards the beginning or advancing towards the final result. But we must then invariably stop, for we see a boundary that 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. Could we but pass over it, we should see the Great Work-



man immediately busied at His work. Try, my friend, to pass over that boundary. Let Gabriel at the same moment try to pass over it. Let the silkworm, or the fly, also try to pass over it. The fly will pass over it and will there behold its Maker working, just as soon as will yourself, or 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 who perceives not that they are and must be secret; or known by Himself only, until they are announced in the gradual unfolding of His providence? He "worketh all things," as Eph. 1, 14. declares, "after the counsel of His own will;" but who can discover what the counsel of His will is? God takes counsel of none of His creatures; in the depths of His own infinitude has He purposed what and whom He would create, and how He would govern His creatures, and what the great eternal result should be. 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 filial trust may cheerfully await the disclosures of His providence; but in either case what was thus secret with Him at the beginning, is still secret now, hidden alike from earth and heaven and the universe. When we shall be able by any possibility to discover God's purposes, then we shall be also able to frustrate them, and then we shall divide with Him the supremacy of His throne.

The Future, and by this term is included the persons and



the events belonging to all coming time, is also secret with God. This specification is in one respect very 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. The proper elucidation of the subject requires, however, its direct application to the Future, or to futurity universally, as 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, we will suppose him wiser tenfold than Solomon, can predict what will certainly occur tomorrow, or the next hour, except so far as prophecy imparts its few glimmering rays? He may conjecture many things very wisely, he may be so profoundly familiar with what we call, human nature, that his presages may occasionally seem to be predictions; still, aside from the word of God, he knows not that the central fires which have been ever raging within the earth, may not burst forth ere tomorrow'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 clouded, at the Cape of Good Hope; or whether on the morning of that day, the robin will perch on the tree that fronts my own door; and the labor will 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 or starry orbs, but what we often term—the



World of Spirits. In giving to men the capacity to invent the telescope, to discover the science of mathematics, and to make progressive attainments in the arts, God has made known to us much which is knowledge, and not simply probable conjecture, of the material worlds around us, immense as is their distance. But the World of Spirits, and I include here Heaven and Hell, their respective localities—so far as they have locality, the actual condition of departed persons individually, and all intercommunication with such persons and with the dead universally;—all this, excepting the few and general revelations which are contained in the Scriptures, is entirely hidden from men. While we inhabit the body and are thus filling up probation in preparing ourselves—each for his own unchangeable state hereafter, God has determined that we should 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 Saviour; and He has also determined that we should 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 we have there revealed to us, He has disclosed to us for our profit: what He has not there revealed, He has withheld for the same reason. And as it is his prerogative to make these revelations, as He asserts this of Himself and of Christ—as representing Himself—exclusively, no additional information can be imparted to mankind 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 nebula in the belt of the constellation Orion—which shines at a distance so vast that a beam of light moving two hundred thousand miles in a second, could not shoot over it until after the lapse of sixty thousand years,—independent, I say, of this evident impossibility, we know that God, as the Infinite Ruler who has given the Bible to men, 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 Rev. 1, 18. He affirms that He has “the keys of hell (i. e. of Hades, or 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 Revelation, that if any man shall add unto the words of the prophecy of that book, God will add unto him the plagues written in that book : thus assuring us, that the account which it 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, have blindly credited a few objections already a hundred times refuted, and there-



fore 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 men while on earth shall possess no knowledge of that world 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 a parable or an account of actual facts, the principles which it affirms are the same. The rich man, when in torment in the world of spirits, entreated that Lazarus might be sent back to this world, to warn his five brethren to shun the sensual and irreligious course which had ended in his own ruin. Christ represents Abraham as then replying, that these brethren of the rich man possessed the writings of Moses and the prophets which were warning sufficient; and when the rich man then said that, if one went to them from the world of the dead the warning would be more powerful, his request is finally refused in the declaration that if these brethren 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, far, more positively does He affirm this of the entire Bible—that these writings are all that men need 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 permitted. This is proclaimed, I repeat it, by Him who has the keys of that un-



seen world, "who openeth and no one shutteth, who shutteth and no one 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, in II. Cor. 12, 4. he tells us that he "heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful for him," i. e. which it was not right for him, or which he was not permitted, "to utter." If Paul was not suffered to communicate to men any intelligence from the spiritual world, we are assured that its gates are now barred against the egress of any unbodied messengers.

We have then succeeded in establishing the truth, that there are Secret Things with God. They are secret, because He has not revealed them to men; and because it is His purpose not to reveal them, while the Christian dispensation is continued. Some of these things are in their very nature, I intend those especially which are connected with the Being and the direct agency of God, incapable of being made known to creatures; they must be secrets unknown to all but God Himself forever. Others are made secret now, that will be revealed hereafter; but while thus unrevealed, they are as absolutely secret as is God's self-existence. They are, therefore, absolutely barred against our approach. All effort to lift the vast 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 relations to what is now popularly termed, *Spiritualism*. All present will understand me to intend that mode of professed intercourse with spiritual beings, which, as many suppose, has been lately discovered; and in which, as they also believe, inquiries may be made, through the agency of some one individual—usually called "a medium," of departed spirits on almost every variety of subjects, and direct answers imparting the desired knowledge may 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 claims to such a notice. As one among 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 the religious, or rather the irreligious, aspect of the subject only which can justify its introduction into this sacred place; and no practical subject which is in its nature hostile to the religion of Christ and which is actually working injury to His cause, should be wholly overlooked by his ministers. This is my apology, my justification, for the notice which I shall proceed



to take of what is now often called—by an abuse of the word, Spiritualism. Let me add that, while I shall studiously abstain from every personal allusion, I shall treat the subject itself with entire plainness, speaking my own sentiments without disguise. Every minister of Christ, as truly as Paul when speaking of himself in Philip. 1, 17. 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 the commission which he bears.

What are the pretensions of Spiritualism: what does it profess to do? It professes, I answer, to hold direct and constant 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 be thus summoned, immediately or mediately: 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, whatever were their characters while on earth, whatever their stations and employments now. Christians who have died in the Lord; and reputable men of the world—together with murderers, drunkards, and harlots, who have not died in the Lord; may be thus summoned. Primitive martyrs and Christ’s apostles may be thus summoned. Ancient prophets and patriarchs may be thus summoned. Paul from the Christian, and Moses from the Jewish, and Abraham from the Patriarchal, dispensation may be thus summoned,



and catechised respecting themselves and any other departed spirits and the worlds in which they dwell; and they may be, ordinarily, expected to impart the needed information. Nay, such interrogatories end not here. We are assured that at spiritual meetings which are now held in certain regions in Europe,—whether such blasphemies are as yet practised in our own country, we know not,—the Lord Jesus Christ is thus summoned and catechised; and He communicates the desired information in return! Intelligence may be also thus professedly obtained concerning almost every subject of inquiry affecting the questioner's earthly interests; 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, where what has been lost or misplaced about the house or elsewhere, may be found; whether certain absent friends are living, or dead; if the former, whether they will again return; and if the latter, where, and when, 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—always excepting still every thing involving true science or acute discrimination or important practical knowledge—on which the wished-for intelligence cannot, ordinarily, be sooner or later thus obtained. The departed spirits of philosophers and statesmen, the minds through whose



labors on earth our race has become wiser and better, and heaven a more desirable abode, will thus come down to gratify the curiosity of the intelligent and reputable inquirer ; and also 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 the season re-visit this earth ? Some one individual who is termed, "a medium," sometimes possessing and sometimes not possessing common capacity and intelligence, becomes through some power peculiar to all such persons the channel, or medium, of communication with the Spirits ; and their answers to the questions proposed are given in the medium's own unconsciously writing them down on the spot, or in rappings or knockings or movements of tables. The medium sometimes becomes, as it is said—"entranced ;" and in some late instances in one region has acted at the time as if seemingly possessed by a good spirit, and as then seemingly possessed by a demoniacal spirit. Such is the machinery, or the mode of intercourse with Departed Spirits now familiarly practised. I will only add here, as all present are aware, that this machinery is now set in motion all over the land, and as familiarly as the sun rises : or, in other words, that these professed communications from departed spirits are now made in our cities and villages, whenever, and wherever, any one can be found to act as a medium, and others are willing to receive them ; that crowds assemble on the Sabbath, some of whom once reverently fre-



quented the sanctuary, thus to pass the hours which Christians spend in Jehovah's worship ; and that public exhibitions of Spiritualism, like those of a theatre or a travelling menagerie, are now occasionally made to all spectators who will pay the performer a shilling, or sixpence, a head !

Such, we say once more, is Spiritualism ; such are its Revelations ; such is the Machinery, or the Mode of obtaining them. Let us now inquire, what is the judgment which the Word of God pronounces on it and on all its pretensions ? It is that 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 its inhabitants and ourselves the midnight of the shadow of death, and Christ, who is the Lord of all its mysterious realms, holds in His own hand its eternal keys. The least 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 he may so deem it, virtually discarding and treading under foot the actual revelations of that world which God has given to men in His word, revelations uttered by prophets,



by the Saviour of mankind and by His apostles; and the substituting for them as immeasurably better, the contemptible responses of spiritual rappings and writings and tippings of tables! The vast curtain which God has hung between this earth 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 behind it, and one corner of which He has kindly raised so far as we can bear the view beyond, the spiritualist would pierce and cut and tear, if possible, into 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 behind the 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 inmost sanctuary. Then, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." The individual may not be always conscious of this, it may partially and for a time only be a sin of ignorance, but it will soon and must soon become a sin of consciousness. No man reads the word of God who knows not that it describes the unseen world as absolutely closed up, barred, and sealed, against all intercourse, all communication whatever, 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, to hold such intercourse, without being soon aware that he acts in direct opposition to God's revealed will. The Spirits (he may call them by the names of departed men, or by any other name) are consulted by him through "the medium," with the avowed object, the very purpose, of discovering what God



has hidden : and this is, whatever palliating or indifferent words of description he may use, contending with God.

But this is not all. No person can become a believer in Spiritualism and familiarly practise its mummeries, who does not also, ultimately and often speedily, necessarily renounce the entire Bible and the God of the Bible. If these spirits, be they angels or demons or the souls of the departed, can and do thus actually reveal the secrets of the unseen world, of what use, then, is the book which is called, the Bible ? This is the very question which every such person in fact asks, and he almost invariably gives the same answer.

I say, that he speedily, as well as invariably, gives it, because Spiritualism cannot by any possibility be divested of its essentially hostile character to the religion of Jesus Christ. Each of the two professes to introduce us immediately to the amazing realities of the world unseen ; and Christianity suffers the intrusion of no other so-called faith here for a single moment,—of Spiritualism, as little as of Mohammedanism. Just as consistently may the Jupiter of ancient Greece and Rome be worshipped in harmony with the only true God and with Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, as the silly revelations of spirits and mediums be credited by a believer in the only infallible volume. As has been previously said, the individual who is beginning to lean towards this delusion, will soon consciously perceive this : he will see, struggle for a time as he may against the conviction, that there is as little fellowship between the two as between midnight and noon. Is he then, with some occasional misgivings, beginning to prefer the responses of mediums and communications from spirits to what “ holy



men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?" Brief, indeed, will be then the period before he will be prepared to say boldly, that the religion, or rather the no religion, of Spiritualism is 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 no sanctity; that prayer, in its scriptural sense, is unmeaning; that sin, except in the form of flagrant crime, is of little moment; that holiness is an empty name; that salvation, and the need of it, is a bugbear. In some few cases indeed, the restraints of a religious training or the dread of injury to character may prevent this fearful descent; but in how many will it be inevitable?

These very practices, under other names, are sternly rebuked and condemned in the Old Testament. The Book of Deuteronomy 18 : 11, 12, affirms that "an enchanter, a wizard, a consulter with familiar spirits, and a necromancer,—are an abomination unto the Lord." The original here translated—"necromancer," means primitively the spirits of the dead; and as used in this passage, it means those impostors among the ancient Israelites who pretended that they were able to summon back departed spirits, and thus to reveal the knowledge of the future,—a meaning exactly expressed in the word, necromancer, itself. It is to the same practices that the passage in Isai. 8, 19. refers. The king of Judah, with his people, was at that season in great distress from foreign conquest; and the monarch, himself an ungodly man, was tempted, just as Saul the predecessor of David had been tempted, to seek for a knowledge of the future by these



unhallowed agencies. He and the nation are accordingly thus addressed: "And when they shall say unto you, 'Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter;' Should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead?" It was a custom of the ancient wizards and necromancers, in the style of modern ventriloquism, to chirp and mutter when they invoked the spirits of the dead. Instead of such profane consultations, the prophet asks—"Should not a people seek unto their God?" In behalf of "the living," is the idea, should they resort "to 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, the theocratic sovereign of the nation. That punishment indeed ceased, and properly, with the final overthrow of idolatry among the Jewish people; but the rebuke, the condemnation, of the sin is unchanged.

Few of the believers in Spiritualism are aware how largely the magical practices of ancient Greece consisted in a pretended intercourse with departed spirits. The same practices, and resting on the same foundation, then prevailed extensively over the heathen world. The ancient classical poets, from the age of Homer downward, describe the dismal ceremonies with which the spirits of the dead were then evoked. These awakened profound dread in every beholder, and especially in those who were directly interested in the expected disclosures. But Spiritualism has reversed the whole process. Its revelations are anticipated by one part of the spectators with sport and ridicule, by another part with startled wonder, and by the remainder with fanatical credu-



lity. Its manipulations and its utterances begin with a puzzle; they end in a show. Which, I would then ask, merits the sterner reprobation: Ancient necromancy, or Modern Spiritualism?

This, then, is the sentence which the Word of God pronounces on Spiritualism: it utterly condemns it, as destitute of any religious character. Were its rappings and knockings and table turnings, and all its other marvels of noise and sight and motion, presented to us simply for investigation, like the tricks of a conjuror, or as problems of natural philosophy, we might characterize it by different language. But its essential excellence, as its votaries affirm, consists in its relations to man's eternal state; in the light which it casts on those momentous interests, compared with which all that pertains 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. In what, we ask, does the worship which its votaries profess to offer, consist? To whom is prayer, then, professedly addressed? To whom are hymns then sung in seeming praise? Not to the Jehovah of the Bible, for Spiritualism has disowned His authority over the invisible world. From whom come these so-called revelations? Not from the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; for the "sword of the Spirit," which is His powerful word, cuts down root and branch all these pretended inspirations. Another deity is then worshipped, whose name has never yet been heard of in heaven or hell, a deity whom the universe knows not, 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 a condemnation, this would be sufficient and complete: *the childishness, the contemptibleness of its professed revelations.* Unseen spirits are summoned, 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; 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. And I speak the literal verity when affirming that, in all the published volumes of these pretended revelations, there is not one original and 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 already published—from Dante's *Paradiso*, or from Emanuel Swedenborg when describing his seven spheres or heavens, or from others; or, if original, are just fit to fill the pages of a fourth rate novel. One page of the vigorous practical sense of Benjamin Franklin, one Proverb of King Solomon, outweighs in value all these revelations. The mind that feeds on such aliment, will ultimately and speedily become half-crazed or wholly crazed, as many are now actually becoming; or will be otherwise rendered as unfitted to discern truth from error as a little child.



*The Character of the Meetings where these revelations are made*, calls for the same condemnation. Scores, it may be hundreds, are collected, some—as has been said—to laugh at it all; some timid from nervous excitement, and some eager and absorbed and fully believing. Soon a young female or middle aged man is ready to act as a medium, who perhaps after a time composes herself or himself into what is called a “trance:” raps, and knocks, and tables moving denote that the World of Spirits is in free communication with any who may propose questions: the answers are thus given, or the “medium” writes them down: laughing, wonder, fear, are wildly active: and these are the revelations, this is the worship, this the religion, of Spiritualism!

Let us suppose that such meetings and such a religion, were to become general throughout New England—a supposition to become reality when the White Mountains shall have sunk ten thousand fathoms deep. As indispensable to this, the three thousand temples which have been consecrated to the God of the Bible must have been first closed; the Saviour whom it reveals must have given place—as the Great Teacher of mankind—to Andrew Jackson Davis, to John W. Edmonds and to Robert Hare; and the Bible itself have become an obsolete volume, except to a few superannuated believers. All that has made the land of the Pilgrims, free, enlightened, virtuous, pious, 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 lectures 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 think you, my friends, before, as the inevitable result, what would be then 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 Brahminism of Hindostan! How long, before a people thus stultified, thus debased, would lose alike their love for freedom, and their courage to protect its institutions; and would willingly become the fit vassals and slaves of the first military adventurer who should lead hither his invading army!

Reason, we then say, has but one decision to pronounce here. If the Bible and the God of the Bible are not both a lie, Spiritualism, in all its claims to supernatural communications, is the most contemptible, the most mischievous, and one of the most wicked, among existing delusions. And if published statements are to be trusted, three places for such *worship* are opened every Sabbath in the city of Boston; and many thousands of its population are "believers," are "converted" to Spiritualism. For the credit of the American mind, we hope that this is gross exaggeration.

But is there nothing extraordinary, nothing independent of human agency, nothing supernatural even, in Spiritualism? With all its magnificent pretensions, has it no secrets which are undiscoverable? If secrets which are yet undiscovered are evidence of supernatural agency, then the mysterious noises and sights which Southey describes, in his life of Rev. John Wesley, as having for a long season disturbed the family of his parents, and which resisted every attempt to detect their origin, must have been supernatural. Then the



Egyptian conjurers, who, as Lane tells us in his "Modern Egyptians," profess to bring up, and seemingly do bring up, the forms of the departed, exercise supernatural power. Then the Hindoo jugglers, who, as the missionary Ward informs us—himself an eye-witness in broad daylight—work marvels apparently miraculous, possess a supernatural power. There is something, I answer, which is constantly operating in 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 measure. This is, what is termed Mesmerism, or Animal Magnetism ; an influence, or an element, in some respects resembling electricity and natural magnetism, and in others independent of both ; an influence or element partly physical, and partly pertaining to the human body, in which, in different persons, it exists in very unequal degrees. Of its nature and its operations but little, comparatively, is as yet fully known ; 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 their operations of this natural agent. It explains the mysteries of Spiritualism, the so-called trances, the pretended revelations, the noises, the movements of tables, with its other phenomena. This is the reservoir from which these marvels are supplied ; and unseen Spirits, particularly, are as guiltless of co-operating or directing, in its exhibitions, as unborn babes. And in addition to this, as has been just remarked, there is credulity immeasurable ; there is morbid excitability, a childish thirst for novelties, a state of mind self-disqualified for re-



ceiving the truth of the Bible, a state of heart incapable of communing with God's holiness and grace. This, as I doubt not, is all. Neither good angels, for they would utterly loathe the whole matter; nor bad angels, for God will not permit them thus directly to act in the affairs of men; nor departed saints, for they are at rest and in transport with their Saviour; nor lost spirits, for they are in prison;—are active here. As thus contemplated, it is all earthly, all delusion, all to be shunned, and if any have been heedlessly led to participate in it—as doubtless many have been—to be wholly renounced. May the Lord bless His word, for Christ's sake!