

The Pythoism of the Present Day.

THE RESPONSE

OF THE

MINISTERS

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

TO A

RESOLUTION OF THAT ASSOCIATION REQUESTING THEIR CONSIDER-
ATION OF WHAT IS USUALLY KNOWN AS

MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

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THE PYTHONISM OF THE PRESENT DAY.

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At the meeting of the Massachusetts Association of the New Jerusalem which was held in Boston on the fifteenth day of April, 1858, the following Resolution was adopted:

“Resolved,—That the Committee of Ministers be requested to consider the subject of what is usually known as ‘Modern Spiritualism,’ and to endeavor to learn what the Doctrines of the New Church teach in regard to it, and what are the duties of its members in relation thereto; and that they be authorized to present the result of their deliberations to the Association at its next meeting, or in print, previous to that time.”

And at the meeting of the same Association at East Bridgewater, in October, 1858, the following response of the Committee was presented and read, and, without opposition, ordered to be printed.

In compliance with the request, contained in a Resolution of this Association adopted at its last meeting, to consider the subject of what is usually known as “Modern Spiritualism,” the Committee have carefully considered the subject referred to them, and

have unanimously agreed to present the following as the result of their deliberations.

TESTIMONY OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
RESPECTING IT.

In the Sacred Scriptures, and also in the writings of the Apostles, very many instances may be found, in which the persons and things of the spiritual world have been seen and heard by men living in this world. An angel appeared to Hagar. Three appeared to Abraham, and two were seen by Lot. An angel spake to Abraham from heaven. The Lord appeared to Isaac. The angels of God met Jacob at Mahanaim. The angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. An angel spake to Balaam. An angel spake to all the children of Israel at Bochim. An angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, to Manoah and his wife, to David; and one spake to Elijah. The Lord opened the eyes of the young man of Elisha, who saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. The prophets saw very many things in the spiritual world. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary saw an angel in the sepulchre, and heard him speak. An angel was sent to Zacharias in the temple, and to Mary espoused to Joseph. An angel appeared to the shepherds abiding in the field, and spake with them; and a multitude of the heavenly host came suddenly into their view, and their very words of glorification and praise were heard. Voices were heard from heaven by the disciples and others.

To the Apostles, after the Lord's ascension, angels appeared—to Philip, to Cornelius the centurion, to Peter in prison, and to Paul when in danger in the ship of Alexandria. Paul also had visions and revelations, having been "caught up into the third heaven, and there hearing unspeakable words not lawful for man to utter." And the Book called the Apocalypse, or the Revelation, consists entirely of things seen by John in the spiritual world, while he was in the spirit, or in a state in which his spiritual senses were open.

And of *all* these it may be said, that there is nothing in the Word tending to show that they were not from the Lord; and of most of them, that there is the strongest evidence that they were from Him. *And they were all unsought.*

But, on the other hand, there is recorded a communication between Samuel, who had died and was in the spiritual world, and Saul the king of Israel in this world, through the woman of Endor as a medium. This intercourse was sought by Saul, and was not from the Lord, having been effected by means contrary to the statutes given by Him to Moses, as is evident from the narration itself. And in the Acts of the Apostles a certain Simon is spoken of, who bewitched the people of Samaria with sorceries, that is, with magic miracles, (which are only the juggleries of spirits, or the tricks of jugglers in the spiritual world), so that they said, "This man is the great power of God," Acts, viii, 10. He offered money to the Apostles, to purchase the power of communicating the Holy Spirit. There is also mentioned a sorcer-

er, a false prophet, named Bar-jesus, or Elymas, who withstood the Apostles, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith; but was smitten with blindness at the word of Paul. And in this book of Acts a certain damsel is also mentioned, who had "a spirit of divination," or, as in the original Greek, "a spirit of python," who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying, and who was delivered from this python by Paul's casting it out.

Thus, in the Bible, are presented two kinds of open communication with the spiritual world, one from the Lord, and in conformity with the Divine Order, and *which is always given unsought*; and the other contrary to the Divine Order, and produced by the unregenerate desires and efforts of spirits and men.

Let it not be understood, however, that all unsought communications are from the Lord. All that are from Him are indeed unsought; but all that are unsought are not necessarily from Him. There are other distinctions which will be referred to in another and more appropriate place.

But in addition to these recorded instances there are specific commands. For in Exodus, xxii, 18, we find it written: "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*;" or as it may be more properly rendered, "*Thou shalt not cause to live*," or, "*Thou shalt not preserve alive*." And the Hebrew word rendered "*witch*" means a female sorcerer, or doer of apparently wonderful works, or user of magical arts. And in the Arcana Cœlestia, 9349, it is said that this

command is not abrogated, but in its external or natural sense is in full force, and "ought altogether to be observed and done." It is most important, therefore, that it should be correctly understood. And the meaning is, that a witch, a user of magical arts, is not to be *made to live*, that is, not to be encouraged, supported, or in any degree countenanced or favored. Not that their natural life is to be taken away, but that they are not to be suffered to live *as witches*; we are to use all means in conformity with divine order, to remove the *life of witchcraft*,—to prevent the desire and the practice of dealing with "familiar spirits." Also, in Deut., xviii, 9—14, we find it written, (we here give a literal translation of the passage as it stands in the Latin of the Arcana Cœlestia, 9188, which is believed to be a more correct rendering of the Hebrew than that given in our Bibles): "*When thou comest to the land which Jehovah God is about to give thee, there shall not be found in thee one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, that divineth divinations, and that interrogates the hells, or an augurer, or a juggler, or an enchanter, or that interrogates a pyllion, or a sooth-sayer, or that enquires of the dead: for an abomination to Jehovah is every one that doeth these things; and on account of these abominations Jehovah thy God expels them before thee. For these nations which thou shalt possess hearkened unto those that interrogate the hells,* and unto diviners, but as for thee, the Lord thy*

*This particular verse we do not indeed find quoted in the writings of the New Church—but the verses above are found,—and we preserve the same rendering of "observers of times" in this verse, which Swedenborg has given in verse 10 just above.

God hath not suffered thee thus to do." Herein are forbidden all the forms of magic, or every species of magic arts. And within these thus enumerated, are included all the practices of modern necromancy or pythonism, misnamed "spiritualism." They are more particularly and manifestly described by the two expressions, "*interrogating a python*," and "*inquiring of the dead*," even if they are not included in the phrase, "*that interrogates the hells*." A *python* is that which in our common Bibles is called a "*familiar spirit*," and also in Acts, xvi, 16, "*a spirit of divination*," which Paul cast out. It was a sooth-saying demon, or a spirit without divine authority, pretending to foretell future events, or making communications from the spiritual world, and was supposed to be within the person possessed. Thus, Levit., xx, 27, it is said, "*A man or a woman in whom is a familiar spirit, (or a python), shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them.*" And Saul said to the woman of Endor, who had a python or familiar spirit, "*Divine unto me by the python.*" The woman of Endor was a medium; the python was the spirit that spake through her. A python is the spirit that manifestly speaks and acts through a person in this world who seeks the intercourse, and submits himself to his operation. But these practices are also, and with equal clearness and exactness, included under the terms, "*inquiring of the dead.*"

In Levit., xix, 31, we find these words: "*Regard not them that have familiar spirits (pythons), neither*

seek after wizards to be defiled by them; I am the Lord your God." In chap. xx, 6, (as found in the Latin, A. C., n. 2466,) "*And the soul which has respect to pythons and to soothsayers, to go a whoring after them, I will set my faces against that soul, and I will cut him off from the midst of his people."*

In II Kings, xxi, 6, it is written respecting Manasseh, king of Judah: "*And he made his son to pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits (pythons) and wizards; he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger."*

In Isaiah, viii, 19, 20, are these: "*And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits (pythons) and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* It is here taught, that when there is any persuasion to seek the intercourse of familiar spirits or pythons, the answer should be, "Should not a people seek unto their God? Why should the living seek the dead?" And the command is to go to the Word; for there is the only light; and if they speak not from this, then there is no light in them. And in the same prophet, xix, 3: "*And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof; and they shall seek to the idols and the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits (pythons) and to the wizards."* And again, xxix, 4; "*And thou shalt be*

brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground; and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit (python) out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust." Here it is declared that those whose counsel is to be destroyed seek to idols, charmers, familiar spirits (pythons), and wizards. And that the voice of those who have familiar spirits (or pythons) is out of the ground, and whispers out of the dust.

From the above passages, and also from II Kings, ix, 22, and xxiii, 24; Isaiah, xlvii, 9, 12, 13; Micah, v, 12; Nahum, iii, 4; Malachi, iii, 5, where soothsayers and sorcerers, witchcrafts and enchantments, are denounced; and also from Rev., xxi, 8, where sorcerers are joined with whoremongers, murderers and idolaters, and are said to have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and also from Rev., xxi, 15, where sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters are said to be *without* the Holy City,—it is most evident, that all desires and attempts to search into the mysteries of the future,—all endeavors curiously to examine into and learn the mysteries of another life, otherwise than from the Word, and the expositions of it authorized by the Lord Himself, and through the means therein pointed out,—all the various forms of necromancy, pythonism, witchcraft, sorcery, spiritual jugglery and enchantment, are contrary to the spirit of the Word, are opposed to the Word, and are therefore forbidden by it, and consequently are to be shunned by every one who believes in the Word.

TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH RESPECTING IT.

And the writings of the New Church show us why these things are forbidden by the Word: they enable us to understand their real nature and quality, to see their essential character, their origin, and hence to perceive rationally, that from their origin and by their tendency they are opposed to the life of the Word. For from these writings we learn that,

“The evil, not only of the Most Ancient Church which was before the flood, but also the evil of the Ancient Church which was after the flood, also the evil of the Jewish Church, as also again the evil of the new Church or that of the Gentiles after the coming of the Lord, just so also the evil of the Church of the present day, is that they do not believe the Lord or the Word, but themselves and their senses: thence there is no faith; and when no faith, no love of the neighbor, thus every false and evil.” A. C., 231.

Also in A. C., n. 127:

“That men through things sensual and scientific willed to enquire into the mysteries of faith, was not only the cause of the fall of the Most Ancient Church, namely of its posterity, of which in the following chapter; but it is also the cause of the fall of every church; for thence are not only falsities, but also evils of life.”

Here we see that that which first caused man to fall is the same that keeps him fallen; that that which was the essential evil at first, is the essential evil *now*, and the essential evil *always*; that the serpent which first seduced is that which always seduces; that “*the old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which seduceth the whole world,*” is the not believing the Lord or the Word, but themselves and their senses,—and hence, the disregarding and disobeying the Lord or the Word, and obeying themselves and their senses; that is, doing their own wills and

indulging the desires and appetites of their senses, or gratifying their lusts and cupidities.

Now it is precisely this, and only this, which ever makes men desire and endeavor to obtain knowledge of things hidden and secret by means other than divinely appointed means. For if they really believed the Lord or the Word, they would not seek for sensible evidence of the truth of what He has revealed to enable them to believe, but they would search the Divine Revelations for what they did not know; and if they should ever desire more than could be found in these Revelations, they would seek it of the Lord Himself, through His divinely appointed means; that is, through a preparation by regeneration to receive new light. For the Divine Law is, "*If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.*" The serpent of old, that is, that part of the mind which is in immediate connexion with the senses of the body,—that part which is willing to believe only what is seen, or heard, or felt,—only what is perceived by the senses,—the lowest and most external part, where man appears to be something of himself, or where is the very kingdom of self,—persuaded them to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that is, to *try* the things forbidden, to *do* them, and then judge for themselves whether they were hurtful, or know from themselves, from sensible experience, whether they were good or evil. And it is the same serpent which makes men now, before they are willing to believe, to desire first to see and hear for themselves whether there is another

world, whether those who have lived here and have died are really living there, and whether there really is any heaven and any hell. It is the same unbelief in the Lord or the Word, which is the inmost and secret cause of all desires to know the future, and of all efforts curiously to look into the arcana of the spiritual world by an external process, before we are prepared by the internal process of regeneration to receive that knowledge.

From the writings, too, of the Church we learn, that the fables which constitute the heathen mythology had their origin in the science of correspondences in the Ancient Church, and were traditions from that Church of important truths expressed in corresponding natural images. And according to this mythology, the *Python* was an immense serpent, sprung from the stagnant turbid waters or foul mud after Deucalion's deluge festering under the rays of a burning sun, the terror of men, but whom their god Apollo alone was able, with much difficulty, to destroy. Hence the priestess, who uttered the oracles in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, having become convulsively agitated by sitting over the opening of a subterraneous cavity and breathing the mephitic air, and in this state of abnormal excitement from beneath declaring things to come, was called *Pythia*, or a *Pythoress*. And hence the demon, or familiar spirit, who spake through her, and those that spake through others who have been possessed with familiar spirits, were called *pythons*; and the necromantic practices of

those thus possessed, or who were their mediums, are called *pythonism*. Who cannot, in this mythological tradition, see the serpent, engendered by the very lowest things of humanity, which destroyed the Ancient Church, and which is the same evil that destroys every church, whether individual or collective, "*that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world,*" whose head the Lord alone is able to tread upon; that is, whom the Lord alone is able to subdue? Who cannot see in this Python that unbelief in the Lord or the Word, and belief in themselves and their senses,* which leads men to disregard divine revelation, and to seek for sensual evidence and outward demonstrations of eternal things, and is the cause of all efforts to climb up into the wisdom and happiness of heaven by some other way, instead of entering by the true door?

It is entirely allowable, however, to confirm the things of faith by the evidence of rational, scientific, and sensual things; and there may be much good use in doing so. But it is never allowable to seek this evidence that we may know whether to believe the things revealed or not. After the heart believes,—when we are disposed to receive as truth what the Lord declares as such,—then may we most usefully find confirmations of our faith in things that are without: but we are never to look without, to proofs to our senses, that we may be convinced by them of the truth of heavenly things, and from them decide what we are to believe. This distinction is *vital*,—

* See Extracts on page 9.

the distinction between what is affirmative and what is negative; between wisdom and madness; between heaven and hell; between the acknowledgment of the Lord and the saying in heart "There is no God:" a distinction which our limits will not permit to be explained further, but which may be seen fully presented in the writings of the New Church. See Ap. Ex., 739; A. C., 2568, 2588, 4760, 6479.

In the Apocalypse Explained, n. 1155, we find:

"A sixth law of the Divine Providence is, that man should not be reformed by external mediums, but by internal mediums; by external mediums means by miracles and visions, also by fears and punishments;—by internal mediums means by truths and goods from the Word and from the doctrine of the church, and by looking to the Lord: for these mediums enter by an internal way, and cast out the evils and falses which reside within; but external mediums enter by an external way, and do not cast out evils and falses, but shut them in. Nevertheless, man is further reformed by external mediums, provided he has been before reformed by internal mediums." * * * * * "If man could be reformed by miracles and visions, all would be reformed in the universal globe."

And after speaking of the manner in which man is brought out from infernal freedom into heavenly freedom, it is said:

"This is the way of man's reformation, but this way is closed by miracles and visions." * * * * * "This way of reformation is also closed by miracles and visions, for they persuade and compel belief, and thus send the thoughts as it were bound into a prison." * * * "Nevertheless, man, whilst he thinks only superficially, may believe that miracles and visions, although they persuade, do not take away the liberty of thinking: but the real case is this; with the non-reformed they take away liberty, but with the reformed they do not take it away; for with the latter they do not shut evils in, but with the former they do."

Here it is distinctly said that man cannot be reformed by miracles and visions, because they are

external means, and operate in an *external* way, and do not cast out evils and falses, but shut them in. They do not produce any *real* belief,—any belief that is saving or lasting: they can never produce *faith*. But if man has been reformed by internal means, then he may be further reformed by external. If he has received faith by an internal process, he may have it perfected and confirmed by these external means. With those who are not reformed, visions and perceptible intercourse with the spiritual world take away freedom,—are compulsory in their effects,—but with those who have been reformed by internal means, they do not destroy freedom. That intercourse, however, which will not injure those who are reformed, will be spoken of more particularly below.

In n. 1156, of the same work :

“All they who wish for miracles and visions are like the sons of Israel, who, when they had seen so many prodigies in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and on mount Sinai, still within a month, receded from the worship of Jehovah, and worshipped a golden calf. They are also like the rich man in hell, who said to Abraham, that his brethren would repent if one from the dead were sent to them; to whom Abraham replied, ‘*They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them; if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead.*’ And they are like Thomas, who said that he would not believe, unless he saw: to whom the Lord said, ‘*Blessed are they who believe and do not see.*’ They who believe and do not see, are they who do not desire signs, but truths from the Word: the latter are internal men, and become spiritual; but the former are external, and remain sensual.” * * * * “for he who does not believe in consequence of the miracles related in the Word, how shall he believe in consequence of miracles which have no place in the Word?”

Here it is distinctly declared, that visions and sensible evidence of the things of another world *never* produce faith.

In n. 1177 of the same, we find :

"That the Lord teaches no one immediately, but mediately by those things appertaining to man which are from the hearing and sight, follows from what has been said above; to which must be added, that immediate revelation is not given, except what has been given in the Word; which revelation, as delivered by the prophets and evangelists, and in the historical parts of the Word, is such that every one may be taught according to the affections of his love and the consequent thoughts of his understanding."

And again :

"Hence it is evident that the Lord teaches the man of the church mediately from the Word, according to the love of his will which he has acquired by life, and according to the light of his understanding which he has thence acquired by knowledge; and that it cannot be otherwise, because this is the divine order of influx. This now is the reason why the Christian Religion is divided into churches, and within those churches into heresies," &c., &c.

That is, that the Lord does never teach man directly, or in such a way as that he will be compelled to understand the divine truth as it is, and thus be compelled to believe it.

In n. 1182, 1183, of the same work :

"Something shall now be said concerning the discourse of spirits with man. It is believed by many that man may be taught of the Lord, by spirits speaking with him; but those who believe this, and are willing to believe it, do not know that it is connected with danger to their souls. Man, so long as he lives in the world, is in the midst of spirits as to his spirit; and yet spirits do not know that they are with man, nor does man know that he is with spirits: the reason is, because they are conjoined as to affections of the will immediately, and as to thoughts of the understanding mediately; for man thinks naturally, but spirits think spiritually; and natural and spiritual thought do not otherwise make one than by correspondences: a union by correspondences causes that one does not know any thing concerning the other. But as soon as spirits begin to *speak* with man, they come out of their spiritual state into the natural state of man; and in this case they know that they are with man, and conjoin themselves with the thoughts of his affection, and from those thoughts speak with

him: they cannot enter into any thing else; for similar affection and consequent thought conjoins all, and dissimilar separates. It is owing to this circumstance, that *the speaking spirit is in the same principles with the man to whom he speaks, whether they be true or false*; and likewise that he *excites them, and by his affection conjoined to the man's affection strongly confirms them*: hence it is manifest that none other than similar spirits speak with man, or manifestly operate upon him; for manifest operation coincides with speech: hence it is that no other than enthusiastic spirits speak with enthusiasts; also, that no other than Quaker spirits operate upon Quakers, and Moravian spirits upon Moravians: the case would be similar with Arians, with Socinians, and with other heretics. All spirits speaking with man are no other than such as have been in the world, and were then of such a quality: that this is the case has been given me to know by repeated experience. And what is ridiculous, when man believes that the Holy Spirit speaks with him, or operates upon him, the spirit also believes that he is the Holy Spirit: this is common with enthusiastic spirits. From this is manifest the danger in which the man is who speaks with spirits, or who manifestly feels their operation. Man knows not of what quality his affection is, whether it is good or evil, and with what others it is conjoined; and if he is in the pride of his own intelligence, the spirit favors every thought which is from that pride: in like manner, if there is in any one a favor of particular principles which has been inflamed from a certain fire, which is the case with those who are not in truths from genuine affection; when the spirit from similar affection favors the thoughts or principles of the man, then one leads the other as a blind man leads a blind man, until both fall into the pit. The Pythonists of old time were of this quality, and also the magi in Egypt and in Babylon; who, on account of their speaking with spirits, and of the operation of spirits upon them manifestly perceived, were called wise. But by this the worship of God was turned into the worship of demons, and the Church perished: wherefore such intercourse was forbidden the children of Israel under the penalty of death."

"The case is otherwise with those whom the Lord leads; and He leads those who love truths, and will them from Him. All such are enlightened when they read the Word, for there the Lord is; and He speaks with every one according to his comprehension. If these hear speech from spirits, which also sometimes happens, they are not taught, but are led, and this so providently, that man is still left to himself; since, as was before said, every man is led of the Lord by affections, and thinks from them as from himself in freedom: if this was not the case man would not be capable of being reformed, nor could he be enlightened. But

men are enlightened variously, every one according to the quality of his affection, and his intelligence thence: those who are in the spiritual affection of truth are elevated into the light of heaven, even so as to perceive the enlightenment. It has been given to me to see it, and from it to perceive distinctly what comes from the Lord, and what from angels; what is from the Lord, this is written, and what is from the angels is not written."

Here it is not only plainly said that the speaking with spirits is attended with danger to the souls of those who engage in it, but some of the reasons are given why it is dangerous. One of these reasons is, that when a spirit speaks with man he comes out of his own spiritual state, or state as a spirit, into the natural state of the man who is spoken with, and conjoins himself with the thoughts of the man, and is therefore in the very same principles that the man himself is in, whether they be true or false; that he excites them, and *strongly confirms them*, so that the man will not be willing to give them up. Indeed it is from this very circumstance of their favoring the man's views, and making him feel strong in them, and confident that they are right views, that the man loves to have the intercourse. For every unregenerate man, being in the love of self, loves his own opinions, and delights to have them appear clearly right, or to have them confirmed. And he who seeks this intercourse becomes therefore by means of it more and more confirmed in his own views, and consequently in this view among the rest, viz., that this intercourse is good, and that the speaking spirit is good,—or at least that the intercourse is not dangerous; when yet it may be performing even then the work of injury, if not of destruction, to the soul.

Every one who *understands* the reasons given in this passage will feel their power. He also says that he has perceived distinctly what came from the Lord to him, and what from the angels; and that he has written only what came from the Lord: what came from angels is not written.

In Heaven and Hell, n. 249 :

“But to speak with spirits at this day is seldom given, since it is dangerous; for then the spirits know that they are with man, which otherwise they do not know: and evil spirits are such that they hold man in deadly hatred, and desire nothing more than to destroy him, soul and body.”

But yet by flattering, that is, by favoring and confirming the man's loves and opinions, they appear to him as near friends; when yet it is in this very way that they are performing the work of destruction to his soul: not only preventing the work or process of regeneration from going on in him, but, by fixing and confirming his natural state, rendering this work more and more difficult to be performed.

In the Arcana Cœlestia, n. 69, it is said :

“Man was so created by the Lord, that during his life in the body he might be able to speak with spirits and angels, as was also actually the case in the most ancient times; for he is one with them, because he is a spirit clothed with a body: but because in process of time men so immersed themselves in corporeal and worldly things that they cared for almost nothing else, therefore the way was shut,” &c.

In n. 784 of the same :

“The reason why heaven was shut is a most profound arcanum (*arcanissima est*); as also why at this day it is so shut, that man does not even know that there are spirits, still less that there are angels, with him; and that he thinks himself to be altogether alone, when he is without companions in the world, and when he thinks with himself: when yet he is continually in fellowship with spirits, who so well observe and perceive what man thinks, and what he

intends and devises, as perfectly and openly as if it stood out to view before all in the world : of this man is entirely ignorant, and thus heaven is shut to him ; when yet it is most true : the reason is, unless heaven were thus shut with him, when he is in no faith, less in the truth of faith, and still less in charity, that it would be most dangerous to him ; this also is signified, by that Jehovah God cast out the man, and made Cherubs to dwell at the garden of Eden on the east, and the flame of a sword turning itself to guard the way of the tree of lives."

In the Arcana Cœlestia, n. 1880 :

"Man was so created, that, during his life on earth among men, he might at the same time also live in heaven among angels ; and during his life in heaven among angels, he might at the same time also live on earth among men ; so that heaven and earth might be together, and might form a one ; men knowing what is in heaven, and angels what is in the world ; and that when men departed this life, they might pass thus from the Lord's kingdom on earth into the Lord's kingdom in the heavens ; not as into another, but as into the same ; having been in it also during their life in the body. But as man became so corporeal, he closed heaven against himself."

Here again it is said, that it is *most dangerous* for any one that is not regenerate, that is, not in genuine living faith, to have this open communication ; and because of the danger, the intercourse which was formerly enjoyed, and which man was created to enjoy, ceased and was forbidden.

In the Arcana Cœlestia, n. 5363, there are mentioned the attempts of evil spirits to destroy man, both soul and body ; the actual attempts upon him who was the divinely authorized scribe of the New Church are related from his own experience ; at the conclusion of which are these words :

"Hence it may be manifest, how dangerous it is for man to be in living consort with spirits, unless he be in the good of faith." See also 7290, 9438, 10751.

In the work "Concerning the Divine Providence,"

n. 130 to 133, this proposition is stated and illustrated, "That no one is reformed by visions and signs, because they force," that is, take away human freedom. Also in n. 134—135, the following proposition is presented, and rendered plain to the reason or intellectual sight: viz., "That no one is reformed by visions and by speaking with the dead, because they force." And while illustrating this proposition these words occur:

"Hence it is evident, that no one can be reformed by any other visions than those which are in the Word."

And also these:

"I have had discourse with spirits and with angels now for several years, and no spirit has dared, nor any angel been willing, to tell me any thing much less to instruct me concerning any things in the Word, or concerning any doctrinal from the Word; but the Lord alone has taught me, who was revealed to me, and afterwards continually did and does appear before my eyes as a Sun in which He is, as He appears to the angels, and enlightened me."

Those who receive the doctrines of the New Church are here informed, that angels are not willing and spirits do not dare, to teach men respecting any thing in the Word, or respecting any doctrinal derived from the Word; and that men are never reformed by speaking with the dead, nor by any other visions than those which are in the Word. This is taught also in the Word Itself, as where it is said in Luke, "*If they hear not Moses and the Prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*" It is therefore plain that no instruction in spiritual truths can be obtained in this way, neither can any one be reformed by these means.

And in the True Christian Religion, n. 779, he who was commissioned to make known to men the internal sense of the Word, and the doctrines of the New Jerusalem, says :

"From the first day of my call to this office, I have never received any thing appertaining to the doctrines of that church from any angel, but from the Lord alone while I was reading the Word. To the end that the Lord might be constantly present, He revealed to me the spiritual sense of His Word, in which sense Divine Truth is in its light, and in this light He is continually present."

And in his own preface to the Apocalypse Revealed, he says :

"Any one may see, that the Apocalypse could by no means be explained, except by the Lord alone ; for all the single words in it contain arcana which could never be understood without particular illumination, and thus revelation ; wherefore it has pleased the Lord to open to me the sight of my spirit, and to teach me. Do not therefore believe that I have taken any thing therein from myself, nor from any angel, but from the Lord alone. Moreover, the Lord said through an angel to John, '*Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this Book,*' Chap. xii, 10 ; by which is meant, that they were to be manifested."

In the Arcana Cœlestia, n. 10290, are these words :

"The reason why these things are signified is, because the Lord speaks with the man of the church no otherwise than by the Word ; for on such occasion He enlightens man so as to enable him to see the truth, and He also gives perception that man may perceive that it is so."

And in n. 10355 :

"From these considerations it may be manifest in what manner revelations have succeeded from the most ancient ages to the present ; and that at this day revelation is only given by the Word."

And in n. 10375 :

"That it is the Word by which the Lord flows in with man, speaks with him, and is conjoined, see n. 1775, 2310, 2899, 3476, 3735, 3982, 4217, 9212, 9216, 9357, 9380, 9386, 9400, 9401, 10290."

In the Apocalypse Explained, n. 1089, at the end:

"In fine, he who loves truth because it is truth, may, as it were, interrogate the Lord in matters of faith which are doubtful, and receive answers from Him, but not elsewhere than in the Word; and this by reason that the Lord is the Word."

Also in n. 1175 of the same we find:

"Hence now it is that the Lord does not teach man *immediately*, but *mediately* by the Word, by doctrine and preaching from the Word, by discourse and conversation; for from these things man thinks freely as of himself."

See also n. 1177, quoted above, where similar things are said.

We are here told that the Lord does not directly or immediately teach man by speaking to him or otherwise; but that He teaches through the Word alone, and doctrine and preaching from the Word, also discourse and conversation respecting it; and that every single doctrine, and every thing appertaining to doctrine, of the New Church, and every thing of the internal sense of the Word, was revealed to Swedenborg during the reading of the Word, and not one through the speech, or other mode of communication, of any spirit or angel.

In the writings of the Church, too, we are taught respecting the magical practices in the other world, and also in this world.

In the Apocalypse Explained, n. 590, it is said:

"That sorceries in the spiritual sense signify perversions of good, may appear from this consideration, that they are mentioned conjointly with fornications; and fornications signify the falsifications of truth: and in the Word where truth is treated of, good is also treated of, because of the divine celestial marriage in every part thereof. * * * * * In ancient times various kinds of infernal arts, called magic, were in use, of which some are recounted in the Word. (as in Deut. xviii, 9, 10, 11);

amongst them were also enchantments, whereby they induced affections and pleasures which another could not resist: this was effected by sounds and low voices, which they either produced or muttered, and which by analogous correspondences had communication with the will of another, and excited his affection, and fascinated him to will, think, and act in a certain manner. Such enchantments the prophets were skilled in, and also used; by which they excited good affections, hearing and obedience; and these enchantments are mentioned in a good sense in the Word, in Isaiah, III, 1, 2, 3, 20; xxvi, 16; in Jer. VIII, 17; and in David, Psalm LVIII, 4, 5. But inasmuch as by such speeches and mutterings, evil affections were excited by the evil, and thus enchantments were made magical, therefore they are also recounted among the magical arts, and severely prohibited, as, Deut., XVIII, 9, 10, 11; Isaiah, XLVII, 9, 12; Rev., XVIII, 23, XXII, 15. [Concerning Balaam, concerning Jezebel.]”

Here it is expressly said, that, although they were used by the prophets to excite good affections, still, on account of the abuse, they were *severely prohibited*; and reference is made at the close of this passage by Swedenborg himself in his manuscript, as is evident from the Latin edition of this work, to Balaam and Jezebel, who made use of them; the former of whom was slain by the command of the Lord, and of the latter of whom, the “*Lord spake saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.*” I Kings, xxi, 23.

In the Arcana Cœlestia, n. 5223, we find this:

“In Egypt the scientifics of that church (the ancient representative church), were principally cultivated, which related to correspondences, representatives, and significatives: by which scientifics were explained the things which were written in the books of the church, and which were performed in their holy worship.” —“the chief persons among those who were skilled in those scientifics, and taught them, were called magi.” —“The magi of that time were acquainted with such things as are of the spiritual world, which they learned from the correspondences and representatives of the church; wherefore also, many of them had communication with spirits, and hence learned illusory (deceptive)

arts, whereby they wrought magical miracles:"—"For magic was nothing else but perversion, and a perverse application of such things as are of order in the spiritual world; thence magic descends."

In n. 7296, of the same :

"They who in the life of the body have practiced cunning, and have contrived various arts of defrauding others, and at length, in consequence of success, have attributed all to their own proper prudence, they in the other life learn things magical, which are nothing else but abuses of Divine order, especially of correspondences : for it is according to Divine order that all and singular things correspond ; as for example, the hands, the arms, the shoulders correspond to power, and thence also a staff : therefore they form to themselves staves, and also representatively set the shoulders, the arms, and the hands, and thereby exercise magical power ; so in a thousand and a thousand other instances."

In n. 7337 :

"Divine miracles proceed from Divine Truth, and go forward according to order ; the effects in ultimates are miracles when it pleases the Lord that they should be presented in that form : hence it is that all Divine miracles represent states of the Lord's kingdom in the heavens, and of the Lord's kingdom on earth, or of the Church ;" * * * "but magical miracles involve nothing at all ;" * * * "and they appear in the external form like to Divine miracles : the reason why they appear like them is, because they flow from order ; and order appears alike in the ultimates where miracles are presented : as for example ; the Divine Truth proceeding from the Lord has in it all power ; hence it is, that there is also power in truths in the ultimates of order ; therefore the evil acquire to themselves power by truths, and gain dominion over others. To take another example also ; it is according to order that states of affection and thought cause the idea of place and distance in the other life, and that the inhabitants appear to be so far distant from each other, as they are in a diverse state ; this law of order is from the Divine (Being), that all who are in the Grand Man may be distinct from each other : magicians in the other life abuse this law or principle of order ; for they induce in others changes of state, and thereby translate them at one time aloft, at another time into the deep, and also cast them together into societies, that they may serve them for subjects : so in innumerable other instances."

See also 9188, 10286, and Ap. Ex., 1191.

In these passages we are taught, that all things done by the Lord, even His miracles, are representations of states of the Lord's kingdom; thus that they are but outward presentations of internal realities,—of the movements of divine order: though the outward forms are miracles, yet what is within them is but the orderly operation of the divine wisdom and mercy: but that all things magical have no internal realities, but are only abuses of divine order as to its externals; that is, advantage is taken of certain unalterable principles of order, and they are perverted or forced to subserve selfish purposes which they were not made to subserve;—or in other words, the laws of divine order which have been established to bring to pass the divine purposes are seized upon and used by man to bring to pass his purposes. Thus, for instance, it is a law of divine order that “*where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst of them;*” His life flows in; He is present; and they are elevated and strengthened: for they have formed an ultimate according to His order, to receive Him,—to receive life from Him more abundantly. Now it is possible for men or spirits to come together in their own name, —to form assemblies or circles to bring to pass things which they desire. If they do thus, life of the same quality with these desires will flow in, and they will be strengthened and confirmed in those desires: for by coming together in that spirit, and with that end in view, they have formed an ultimate which can receive such life more abundantly. So is it of di-

vine order that the hands of a man are the ultimates of his power,—that is, that they are those forms of the body into which his life can flow, and be in the fullness of its ability; into which the powers of his mind, his skill and tact, can be concentrated and exist in their strength and fullness of action. Now, if the hands are used or applied in certain ways, mesmeric power is exerted; and if several meet and arrange themselves in a certain form, and place their hands in certain positions together, and unite in certain movements or manipulations, their powers will be united; the spheres of their life, their active desires, will flow together, come down into their power, and produce effects,—and the quality of what is done, or of these effects, will be the same as that of the life, or the desires, which produced them. If these desires are contrary to the commands of the Word, and opposed to its spirit and life, then are the movements magical in their nature.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF EMANUEL SWEDEN- BORG.

The extracts thus far given are from those expositions or explanations of the Word, which have been made by divine authority, and published by the divine appointment, and which, therefore, contain all the doctrines and instructions of the Church; as also from the work called “The Apocalypse Explained,” which was not entirely finished, and was therefore not published, during the life in this world of him that wrote it.

But it seems proper here to introduce the testimony of Swedenborg himself, as a man,—the personal testimony of him who was the divinely chosen medium for the descent of the New Church to men on earth: because no man has ever had that variety and fullness of experience, that absolute knowledge and distinctness of perception by all the senses, of the things of the spiritual world, nor that deep and clear understanding of all that was thus known and perceived; for to him, during a period of nearly thirty years, the things of that world were as manifest as the things of this world are to men; and from his most thorough education and preparation under the divine auspices, he was, above all others, able rightly to appreciate as well as intellectually to view the things thus presented to him.

In a private journal which he kept of his experience in that world, called his “Spiritual Diary,” are found the following:

“That spirits tell lies, and narrate things that are very fictitious.
 —When spirits begin to speak with a man, he must beware that he believe nothing that they say. For nearly every thing they say is fabricated by them, and they lie: for if they are permitted to narrate any thing, as what heaven is, and how things in the heavens are to be understood, they would tell so many lies, that a man would be astonished. This they would do with solemn affirmation. Wherefore I have never been permitted to place any faith in those things which spirits have narrated. They are desirous of fabricating things; and whenever there is any subject of conversation, they think they know it, and they express their opinion about it variously, one after another, entirely as if they knew; and if a man then listens and believes, then they insist, and in different ways deceive and seduce him; for instance, if they are permitted to speak about future things, or about things in the universal heaven that are unknown, or about all things which a man desires to know; yet all things which they say, whilst they speak from themselves, are nothing but lies: where-

fore men must beware, and not believe them. It is on this account that the state of speaking with spirits on this earth is most perilous, unless the man be in a true faith. They induce so strong a persuasion that it is the Lord Himself who speaks and who commands, that a man cannot but believe and obey them." (*Spiritual Diary*, 1622.)

"*Concerning the communication of Spirits with Man.*—As has been said and shown, spirits, who are the souls of those who have died as to the body, when they are with man, and are present behind him, think that they are altogether men; and if it should be permitted them, it would be possible, through the man who speaks with them, but not with others, for them to be altogether in the life of the world; and indeed so manifestly, that they would be able through another man to communicate their thoughts by words, yea, by letters; for sometimes, indeed quite often, they have directed my hand, while writing, altogether as their own; so that they supposed that themselves were writing; which is so true that I can attest it: and indeed, if it were permitted, they would be able to write in their own style, which also I know by a very little of experience; but this is not permitted." (*Spiritual Diary*, 557.)

"*That some are such in the other life, that they act under the personages (or characters), of others, not under their own.*—2408. There was a certain one with me, who thought and spoke only under others; that is to say, he perpetually represented others, whom he happened to know: thus he concealed his own personage [or character]. Such are easily discerned, and are oppressive: they derive it also from the life of the body, that they always hold up before them others who think and speak thus, in order that they may persuade: some also, that they may the better plot deceits."

See also n. 2659, where he speaks of the eager desire of spirits to entirely rule man, both interiors and exteriors, especially his body.

"*Why Spirits do not manifest themselves before men, and instruct men concerning the existence and quality of spirits.*—There are very many reasons, which are in the secret and sanctuary of the Lord, why such things should not exist; it is permitted to mention only, that they cannot be manifested to a man who is not in the knowledges of a true faith; because thus, [that is by being in these knowledges], the Lord is able to be present, and to guard with especial care, lest the spirits, because they are flitting about in bands and troops, and desire nothing else than to pervert man, yea, to kill him, should do injury to the man as to body and soul; for when it is allowed them to manifest themselves,

then they also operate to manifest sensation into (upon) the ideas and will of man. It is otherwise with those who are in the knowledges of a true faith; then the Lord guards with especial care, lest such things be brought upon man. Besides, to present spirits and souls of the dead to the eyes of man, and thus to urge him to believe, this also is repugnant to the wisdom of the Lord, who does not break man, but bends him." (*Spiritual Diary*, 2393.)

See also 5151, of the same, where he shows why there is not, and should not be, open communication with the spiritual world for the inhabitants of our earth, as for those of other earths.

In n. 1776, *Spiritual Diary*, he says, that spirits "were persuaded concerning things of which they could not possibly have any knowledge;" "that they judge from the persuasion of the man;" that they thought that the knowledges in his (Swedenborg's) memory were their own; that if he (Swedenborg) should demonstrate any thing falsely, they would be persuaded of it; "for in things particular they are not able of themselves to judge."

"That the things which I learned in Representations, Visions, and from Discourses with Spirits and Angels, are from the Lord alone.—Whenever there was any representation, vision, and discourse, I was kept interiorly and most interiorly in reflection upon it, as to what thence was useful and good, thus what I might learn therefrom; which reflection was not thus attended to by those who were presenting the representations and visions, and who were speaking; yea, sometimes they were indignant when they perceived that I was reflecting. Thus have I been instructed; consequently by no spirit, nor by any angel; but by the Lord alone, from whom is all truth and good; yea, when they wished to instruct me concerning various things, there was scarcely any thing but what was false: wherefore I was prohibited from believing any thing that they spake; nor was I permitted to infer any such thing as was proper to them. Besides, when they wished to persuade me, I perceived an interior or inmost persuasion that the thing was such, and not as they wished; which also they wondered at: the perception was manifest, but cannot

be easily described to the apprehension of men." (*Spiritual Diary*, 1647).

"*That spirits speaking are scarce at all to be believed.*—Nothing is more familiar to spirits who are speaking, than to say that a thing is so or so; for they think that they know every thing, and indeed solemnly assert that it is so, when yet it is not so. From experiments made several times, it may be evident of what quality they are, and how they are to be believed: when it is asked [of them] whether they know how this or that is, then one after another says that it is so, one differently from another: even if there were a hundred, one would say differently from another; and indeed for the time with confidence, as if it were so, when yet it is not so. As soon as they notice any thing which they do not know, they immediately say that it is so: besides very many other proofs that they speak as if they knew, when yet they do not know." (*Spiritual Diary*, 1902).

"*That spirits may represent another person; and the spirit, as also he who was known to the spirit, cannot know otherwise than that he was the same.*—This has many times been shown to me, that the spirits speaking with me did not know otherwise than that they were the men who were the subject of thought; and neither did other spirits know otherwise: as yesterday and to-day, some one known to me in life [was represented by one] who was so like him, in all things which belonged to him, so far as they were known to me, that nothing was more like; wherefore let those who speak with spirits beware lest they be deceived, when they say that they are those whom they knew, and that they are dead."

"For there are genera and species of spirits of a like faculty; and when similar things are called up in the memory of man, and are thus represented to them, they think that they are the same persons: then all the things are called forth from the memory which represent those persons; both the words, the speech, the tone, the gesture, and other things: besides that they are induced to think thus when other spirits inspire them; for then they are in the fantasy of those, and think that they are the same." (*Spiritual Diary*, 2860, 2861).

"Spirits can assume the appearance of the person whom a man adores or venerates, and say that they are the person himself; because under the person of such, they desire to be adored or venerated themselves." (*Spiritual Diary*, 4, Index).

"*That spirits who are of the same genus and species can be induced to believe that they are the same, although they are not.*—On several occasions it has been shown me by experience, that spirits have been induced to believe, that they were the persons concerning whom I have been able to have some knowledge of their life and character; and from that knowledge they induced other

spirits to believe that they were the same: they spoke in a like manner as they, they had like dispositions, and many things like; so that from the knowledge with me they could not believe otherwise than that they were the same persons, although those were living whom they were induced to believe themselves to be; yea, they acted out their person so like [them], that, compared with the knowledge of it that was with me, they differed none; for they are their images, because of a like genus and species, as to the image of it in the idea of man. Such they were with me; and they spoke with me, and willed to persuade me, because they had been persuaded that they were the same persons; but because I have learned that other persons could be so counterfeited with such close resemblance, I was not induced to believe.

"Wherefore let those, to whom it is given to speak with spirits, take heed to themselves, lest they should be induced to believe that they are those whom they declare themselves to be, and should thus persuade them that those are dead, as they are wont to say, although they are alive: for those who in genus and in species are alike as to mind and manners, bear themselves in like manner, with all similitude taken from the knowledge of the man with whom they are; which may be still further evident from this circumstance, that such spirits in general are associated with those who are like him, and when with him, they do not know otherwise than that they are the same."—(*Spiritual Diary*, 2686, 2687).

In the "*Adversaria*," or notes upon the historical Books of the Old Testament, under the xxviii Chap. of I. Samuel, are these:

"But it is to be observed, that Samuel was never raised from the dead by the python; but that this was only a fallacy: another was raised who represented Samuel; for when it is permitted to evil spirits, or to their leader, they are then able so dexterously to represent a person, whatever person they wish, provided that person has been seen and known to the man, yea, so cunningly, that not even an iota of his voice, nor any thing natural to him, is wanting."—5020, 5021.

"That it was not Samuel is sufficiently clear, because the woman of the python did it: also because it is said in v. 13, that gods ascended, and v. 14, that he asked whether it was Samuel; these things are so manifest to me, that it was not Samuel, but that he was represented by some evil spirit, that nothing is more manifest." 5022, 5023.

SUMMING UP AND APPLICATION OF THE EVIDENCE, AND CONCLUSIONS DRAWN THEREFROM.

There are two kinds of open or manifest communication with the spiritual world;—one according to Divine Order, thus from the Lord; and the other contrary to Divine Order, thus not from Him. And there is one most manifest distinction between these two kinds of communication which are spoken of in the Word and in the writings of the New Church. It is this: those manifestations that were from the Lord came *unsought*, if not entirely unexpected, by those to whom they were granted; while those which were contrary to order, and from man's own will, were marked by the efforts and acts of that will,—were sought by those who had them, through certain exertions of their own.

But notwithstanding all that were from the Lord came unsought, yet it does not follow that all those which come unsought are from the Lord. Evil spirits may in certain cases succeed in so far obtaining possession of diseased nerves as to make mediums of those who have such nerves. Every disordered condition of the human body is a plane upon which evil spirits can act; and certain kinds of derangement of the body, together with some peculiar abnormal conditions of the mind, will enable them to make themselves manifest, without any seeking or apparent desire on the part of him through whom they speak, or to whom they manifest themselves.

Although man is so constituted that he can enjoy

open intercourse with the spiritual world whenever it pleases the Lord, and were he in the state in which he was originally created, or had he not fallen, this intercourse might be no uncommon occurrence, yet we are not authorized to expect that even then it would be common to all, nor that with those who might enjoy it it would be continuous or uninterrupted. Certainly we are not to suppose that any orderly communication can be common at present, but on the contrary exceedingly rare, on account of the danger to the soul with which open intercourse with spirits must be attended in every case where the man is not in genuine faith.

Whenever, therefore, there is sensible communication with spirits which comes unsought, it is necessary to follow the direction of the beloved disciple, in his epistle to the first Christians, viz., to "try the spirits whether they be of God." Good spirits will rejoice to be thus tried, and will truly and earnestly assist in the trial. And they are tried, by carefully watching what states of mind they produce or favor; for their words and sentiments may be most artful and deceptive,—they may utter thoughts that are not their real thoughts, but used merely to conceal their real character. They are to be judged by their permanent influence,—whether they awaken and increase genuine deep humility,—whether they increase our love and reverence for the Word, and lift us upward towards the Lord,—whether they lead us to think often of, to desire constantly and endeavor earnestly to apply to our life, these words of His, "*If any*

man wills to come after me, let him deny himself;”—for not a single step is ever taken towards heaven, the beginning of which is not some form of self-denial. When Peter said unto the Lord, “*Be it far from thee Lord, this shall not be unto thee,*” that is, that it was not necessary for Him that He should lay down his life; the reply was, “*Get thee behind me Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*” And in all the progress that is made in heaven forever, the first of every step is *always* an act of obedience to some more or less interior meaning of the precept, “*let him deny himself;*” for, only as they “die unto themselves,” do angels “live unto the Lord.” But if the influence tends to make us satisfied with ourselves, and to increase our self-esteem, it is from evil spirits. So, too, if it leads us to regard our own views, and the views of other men, as eminently wise, and worthy to be trusted and followed; lessening our real and practical reverence for the Word, and neutralizing our feeling of obligation to obey its precepts,—if it tends to obscure or make dull our perceptions of the vital and eternal importance of faithfully examining our lives by the rule of the Ten Commandments,—then is that influence surely from beneath.

The evidence above adduced reveals also another distinction. In those communications mentioned in the Word, which were from the Lord, there was a kind of daylight openness; a healthful and genial atmosphere around them; a clearness and certainty of revelation; while that of the woman of Endor

took place in the obscurity of night, with an uncertainty of light, so that only the woman herself could see who came up. And, instead of fullness, clearness, and distinctness of revelation, wizards are said to "*peep and mutter*;" and the utterances of familiar spirits are described in Isaiah, as voices "*out of the ground*," and their speech as "*low, and whispering out of the dust*."

From the evidence which has been adduced, it is most clear that all dealings with familiar spirits, or pythons, all efforts to obtain through the senses a knowledge of future events, or of the things of the spiritual world, now in mercy concealed from the gaze of men,—that all attempts to procure open intercourse with its inhabitants,—are contrary both to the letter and to the spirit of the Word. And from the testimony of the New Church, it is apparent why it is so, viz:—because such knowledge through the senses, and such intercourse, would be most dangerous to all who are not in genuine faith from the Lord, so as to be capable of being protected by Him; that is, to all who have not been prepared by regeneration,—to all who have not arrived at such a state by an internal way or process. For the Word is given for man's salvation; its whole spirit and living power is drawing man to Heaven; and therefore every thing that endangers and destroys man's spiritual life is directly opposed to it. It is most evident from the testimony adduced, that the only lawful way to seek such intercourse, is that of following the Lord in the regeneration, and thus suffering ourselves to

be interiorly prepared by Him. All seeking in any other way is contrary to Divine order; contrary to all the movements and activities of the one only true life that proceeds from the Lord. Genuine orderly intercourse will never take place until after due preparation of the interiors by the Lord, as man performs his part of the covenant, by religiously keeping the Commandments that are written on his table. (T. C. R., 285.)

And when open intercourse with the spiritual world is given by the Lord, when it takes place according to divine order, by a course of interior previous preparation, it will come bearing its own evidences with it,—in the clear light, and surrounded with the genial and healthful atmosphere of the day. There will be no midnight chill; no cold, uncertain light; no mephitic, spiritual vapor from beneath, operating upon a sickly frame, or flowing into diseased nerves; no obscure mutterings of things in themselves unmeaning and useless, or absurd and blasphemous; no “*voice out of the ground*,” no “*speech whispering low out of the dust*,” no favoring of concupiscences, and gratification of unregenerate will; no depressing of the Lord and exaltation of man; no surrendering of human freedom into the hands of unknown spirits. But it will come *unsought*,—at least by any external efforts,—if not unexpected; with living evidences of the divine permission; surrounded with the heavenly influences of the denial of self, of abasement of the pride of man, and the exaltation of the Lord alone.

There may be those who will here ask, Why are these necromantic or pythonic practices ever permitted? So may it in the same manner be asked, Why is idolatry permitted, which is forbidden in the very first of the Ten Commandments? The answers to both are similar. Both idolatry, and pythonism or necromancy, are grievous sins to those who receive the Word as divine truth: but to those who do not believe in the Word they are far less grievous sins; while to those who know nothing of the Word, these evils may not be sins at all. To the heathen, whose idol-worship is enjoined by their religion, this worship is actually a means of salvation. Thus it is revealed to the New Church, that heathen, who have lived according to the teachings of their religion,—who have obeyed their religious instructions, and not themselves and their own wills,—are saved. Their spiritual condition is such, that a religion derived from the representative worship of the Ancient Church is better adapted to their salvation: and idolatry, which is forbidden by the Word, is yet above *them*; and thus to them it is a stepping stone upwards *towards* the Word and heaven. Yet before they reach even *their* heaven, which is beneath the heaven of Christians,—before they can come even into the heaven of the heathens,—their idolatry is abandoned, and they come into the acknowledgment of the one God of heaven and of earth. To such, and for the same reason, the Pythonic oracles at Delphi, at Dodona, and at the temple of Ammon in Libya, were means of good. Now there are multitudes at

the present day who have no appreciation of the Word. There are many, very many, around us, and with us, in whose hearts there appears to be scarcely any, if any, acknowledgment of the Word; and in whose understandings there appears to be very little, if any, real belief or faith in it; and consequently, little or no belief in another world,—in a heaven or a hell. The spiritual state of these may be such, as that even the demonstrations of pythonism or necromancy may be above them, and thus be a means, if not of elevating them, yet of restraining, and preventing their further descent into the abysses of infidelity. So that, although no one who is in possession of the Word can be said to be entirely without fault in seeking after familiar spirits, yet such seeking is to *them* comparatively innocent, and may to some be even a means by which they may be elevated towards a belief in the Word. But, those who acknowledge the Lord and His Word cannot, without danger to their souls, engage in these pythonic practices. “*A witch thou shalt not vivify,*” that is, shalt not countenance or encourage, is a precept plainly declared to be now in full force in its external or natural sense (A. C., 9349); and we may safely infer that the other similar prohibitions are equally so. We cannot innocently and safely become connected with these exhibitions, even by our voluntary presence, from mere motives of curiosity or entertainment. When the damsel spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles (chap. xvi, 16—18), who was possessed with “a spirit of divination,” that is,

according to the original Greek, "a spirit of python," followed Paul and the other apostles, crying out after them, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who show unto us the way of salvation;" although these words were words of truth, were wholly true, yet the apostles neither answered her, nor asked a question: they spoke not, nor noticed her, until Paul, being grieved at her condition, commanded the spirit to come out of her. The first act, the first notice, on the part of the apostles, was the casting out of the python.

We are fully aware that there are those who favor these pythonic practices, because by them men may be brought to believe in the existence of a spiritual world, and thus be led to the New Church; and who bring forward as evidence some few cases of those who have had their attention drawn to it through these practices. That some good is made to come forth from them has already been stated; and for this are they permitted. That *some* use should be made to come forth from them,—that the wrath of man should praise Him, and the remainder of wrath, or that which cannot be made to praise Him, should be restrained,—that even hell itself should perform some uses, that is, some vile yet necessary work towards the regeneration of man,—both the Word itself, and the doctrines of the church drawn from the Word, teach us confidently to expect: yet those very doctrines are revealed to keep us out of hell. Many have been drawn towards the church, through the falsehoods and calumnies uttered by its enemies,

(perhaps more than have ever been by means of pythonism): yet who would favor or take part in such calumnies? More, to all human appearance, have been carried *out* of the church, and out of all Christianity, yea, out of all religion, by this seeking of familiar spirits, than have been carried out by any calumnies against the church: yet who would join in the calumnies? The Word (Luke, xvi, 27—31) plainly teaches, that men can never “*be persuaded,*” —that no living or real belief, no belief of the heart, no belief of any value, can ever be produced,—by one rising from the dead. And the doctrines of the New Church teach, “that no one can be reformed by any other visions than those which are in the Word,” (D. P., 134); and “that no one is reformed by visions, and by speaking with the dead, because they force,” (D. P., 134: see also 134½, 135). Nor from any facts that have come to the knowledge of your Committee, are they able to refer to a single instance, where pythonism has been of use in any other way than that in which good is educed from permitted evils. And the reason is manifest; viz., that that which is itself essential infidelity, can never be the source of true faith. A man is led to the church only as he is reformed; and the church teaches that he cannot be reformed in this way. Whatever uses evidence to the senses of the existence of a spiritual world may perform for those who are in faith and the good of faith, it is clear that it can never of itself *produce* faith. For, in the Arcana Cœlestia, n. 233, it is said: “To explore the mys-

teries of faith by scientifics," that is, by things known from without, "is as impossible as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." "Hence it is evident that they who consult the things of sense and science concerning matters of faith, not only precipitate themselves into doubt, but also into denial, that is, into darkness; and, in consequence of such darkness, into every sort of lust and concupiscence: for, whilst they believe what is false, they also do what is false; and whilst they believe that what is spiritual and celestial is not given, they believe that what is corporeal and worldly only is given: thus they love whatever is of themselves and the world; thence from falsity are cupidities and evils." It is therefore to be expected, that those who seek to obtain faith by means of evidence to the senses should be plunged into spiritual darkness and infidelity. It is not strange, that making the senses the centre of the faith should tend to make them also the centre of the love; that the senses which are chiefly relied upon and believed in should be also chiefly loved; that necromantic arts should be founded upon sensual lusts, and by winding and deceptive ways should undermine and lead away from the highest and purest love of angels, away from the Church, and out through all Christianity, and beyond the boundaries of Mohammedanism, and even of heathenism, into the unrestrained sensuality of "free-love."

Your Committee are also fully aware, that there are those who regard these manifestations of spirit-agency as the imperfect beginnings of an orderly

open intercourse with the spiritual world. *If this were so*, still it is most dangerous for those who have the Word, but especially for those who are acquainted with the doctrines of the New Church, and thus have the means of understanding what they are, to take any part in them so long as they are of their present character. The law, "thou shalt not vivify a witch," is now in full force, in its literal sense. The influence of these manifestations is evidently not towards the Lord and His Church. For they do not keep prominent before the mind the necessity of denying self (in any true or religious meaning of self-denial); without which denial, not a single step is ever taken towards heaven. They do not make prominent, and keep constantly before the mind, the Lord's ordinances. They do not make men desire to be baptized, and to be prepared for a worthy participation in the Holy Supper. Repentance and regeneration are ignored, and "progress" is substituted. These manifestations, too, of spirit-agency, so far as they are not deceptions of the mediums themselves,—deceptions of this world,—are yet evidently spiritual juggleries, or deceptions of spirits in the spiritual world, from their close resemblance to the things described by Swedenborg. Whatever they may *become*, therefore, these manifestations are to be shunned *now*. When they shall have become entirely changed in quality and character, then will be the earliest period in which the members of the Church can safely take any part in them.

But your Committee are unanimously of opinion,

that these manifestations are not the beginnings of orderly intercourse; that they will not grow gradually into heavenly manifestations; but that they belong to that class of counterfeits and magical imitations of the good and true things of the Church, which are to be expected when that Church is descending, and against which it is to exercise its utmost circumspection, in obedience to the Lord's solemn warning in Matt., xxiv, 24: "*For there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.*"

The Committee are also aware, that there may be those who feel free to take part in these manifestations, from an inward belief that they themselves are "*in the good of faith,*" and therefore cannot be injured. But it is to be remembered, that a genuine faith or belief in the Lord and in His Word never can lead any one away from the Lord and the Word; that those who *act out* this faith, who *act from* this faith, who *live* this faith, that is, who are in the good of faith, will always seek light of the Lord Himself through His own divinely appointed means,—through preparation by regeneration;—never by means forbidden in the Word. For, if we are in faith, we shall really believe the divine means to be the only true and effectual means, and shall not be disposed to seek any other. It is the want of faith, the unwillingness to believe the Lord and His Word, that produces the inclination to consult the things of sense

concerning matters of faith. Those who are in the good of faith are constantly looking to the Lord, and by it are made to cleave always unto Him; all such can therefore always be protected by Him: as they seek, so are they enabled to receive, His protecting power. They submit all to Him; and He therefore can lead them in their freedom. To those of them who He sees will be benefited by open intercourse, He grants it without their use of magic means; indeed, without any interference on their part: and as they leave all to Him, He protects them against all injury from the falsehoods, the jugglery, and witchcrafts of spirits. And those of them who He sees will not be benefited, He protects from such intercourse, and from the arts and seductions of necromancers and witches in either world, which would lead them to desire and to seek it. Both are protected by the same power, and from the same cause, against all that would vitally injure; for, "*according to their faith, so is it unto them.*"

There are those, too, who refer to the case of Swedenborg himself in justification of the practice of seeking information from spirits. We have already stated that there are two kinds of open or manifest communication with the spiritual world, and pointed out some of the marks of distinction between them. But we will here present the following statements, that the leading points of difference, between the case of Swedenborg and that of the pythonists of the present day, may be seen distinctly and at one view.

I. That the case of Swedenborg is different from that of *any other man at any time*,—as is manifest from his own statements in his *Spiritual Diary*. He says :

“This manifestation of the Lord, and the intromission [of me as to the spirit] into the spiritual world, is more excellent than all miracles. This experience has not been granted to any one, as it has been to me, *from the creation*. The men of the golden age, or of the most ancient church, conversed indeed with angels; but it was not granted to them to be in any other light than what is natural. But it has been granted to me to be both in natural and spiritual light at the same time. By this experience I have been enabled to see the wonderful things of heaven, to be amongst angels as one of themselves, and at the same time to learn truths in the light [of truth] itself, and thus to perceive and teach them, and in this manner to be led by the Lord.” (*Spiritual Diary, Appendix, page 157.*)

“The things opened or revealed in my writings, are not miracles; because every man, as to his spirit, is in the spiritual world, without separation from his body in the natural world; but in my case there has been a certain separation; only, however, as to the intellectual part of my mind, and not as to the voluntary part, or the will. (*Appendix to Spiritual Diary, page 169.*)

II. That his (Swedenborg's) mission was to reveal the internal sense of the Word, and to make known the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem, and that for this purpose it was necessary that his mind should be *fully* prepared; that he should be in *fullness* of faith; that there should be no doubts any where, or in any region of his mind. It was necessary that he should believe in his heart; that he should understand clearly and thoroughly, or rationally see; and also that the externals of his mind should be fully satisfied with external evidence; that there should be undoubting belief on every plane of the mind. His sight, or sensible perception, of the spiritual world was incidental and confirmatory; his revelation of the Word the grand or primary thing;

or his sight of the spiritual world was a necessary incident to his opening the internal sense of the Word.

III. That Swedenborg did never receive any thing appertaining to the internal sense of the Word, or to the doctrines of the New Church, from any angel or spirit. (D. P. 135; T. C. R. 779; Preface to *Apocalypse Revealed*.) But modern mediums receive wholly from spirits.

IV. That the opening of the spiritual senses of Swedenborg came *unsought*, and unexpected; but the communications of the present day are sought by every possible art; and efforts are made to obtain what Divine Order does not grant.

V. That to Swedenborg the Lord himself appeared, and sent him forth on his mission of uses in that world equally as in this; and for that purpose opened his spiritual senses into a most distinct, complete, and daylight perception of the things of that world; a perception too, entirely consistent with a fully healthful condition of his body, and with the full freedom of his soul. But the pythonism of the present day is not consistent with a sound condition of either body or mind, nor with a state of true spiritual freedom; daylight cannot be predicated of its manifestations; neither do pythonists speak in the name of the Lord.

VI. Swedenborg was thus specially commissioned, in a way unsought by himself, to communicate to men those high, interior, and eternal truths from the spiritual sense of the Word,—those things “*which*

prophets and kings have desired to see and to hear :" whereas, through the modern mediums, nothing of any eternal value, but much that is absurd and utterly worthless, much of deadly falsity, and much of infidel blasphemy, is constantly uttered.

VII. Through Swedenborg, came revelations of the absolute Divinity of the Lord's Humanity; of the plenary inspiration and divinity of the Word; and of the necessity of man's living according to the precepts of the Word while inwardly looking to the Lord; and all the communications of which he was the medium were but branches from these; teaching the denial of self, the laying down of man's natural life, that he may be able to receive the life of the Word as his life: and all these communications were made by him as a man, in the full freedom of manhood; uttering nothing in trances; no pythons speaking through him. But what comes through modern mediums, either openly, or secretly and subtilely, denies the Lord's Divinity, and that He has "*all power in heaven and on earth;*" depreciates the Word, and undermines its teachings respecting the laying down of the natural life, or the resisting of the natural inclinations that are opposed to the Word because their indulgence is forbidden by the Lord, or the careful shunning of evils as sins against Him. Its tendency is, to depress the Lord, and to exalt man; making him satisfied with himself; flattering his self-importance, and confirming his unregenerate state.

These statements of difference might be almost indefinitely extended ; but there is neither time nor room for more. Let it suffice to say, that the more closely the case of Swedenborg is scrutinized, and compared with that of the pythonic mediums of the present day, the more full and satisfactory, the more complete and bright with daylight, will be the manifestation of their diametrical opposition. It is of no consequence that these spirits sometimes tell the truth, nor even if they should sometimes be mediums of divine truth. For Balaam the soothsayer was such a medium ; he spoke some truth ; he was even made use of by the Lord to utter divine truth : yet he seduced Israel to fornication ; he is named with condemnation in the Apocalypse, (chap. ii, 14) ; and he was among the Midianites who were slain by the express command of the Lord to Moses (Num. xxxi, 2, 8). Nor is it of any consequence that they sometimes answer in the language of the Word ; for the devil did thus, at the temptation of the Lord. When they use the Word, it is not *from* good, nor *for* good ; but for the bringing to pass of their own purposes. They use it, only because they know it has a power which other words have not.

From the evidence which has been adduced, then, it is plainly not allowable, and also entirely useless, for those who receive the doctrines of the New Church, to consult modern mediums respecting matters of faith. And it is as plainly not allowable, and as evidently useless, to go to modern "circles" to

obtain information. Neither can we safely countenance them from motives of curiosity, or a love of amusement. And there is reason to fear, that it is not any more agreeable to divine order, or of any more true efficacy, to go for relief from bodily disease and pain; since the very hand through which the bodily pains may apparently and temporarily be assuaged, may possibly be the medium by which the soul is magnetized and filled with a secret infernal influence, from which we may never be able to be fully delivered. Every time they are visited voluntarily and countenanced, *something* is given up. At the very first step, we lose something of the true freedom of humanity; and at each succeeding step we yield ourselves,—the manhood which the Lord has given us—more and more into the hands of spirits who are entirely unknown, excepting as being in connection with the “dogs and sorcerers” who are “without the Holy City.”

To those who have received the doctrines of the New Jerusalem,—to all who in truth “*are asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward,*” and who desire to “*enter in through the gates into the city,*” and who therefore are represented by the children of Israel journeying towards the promised land,—the words which Moses spake to them while yet in the wilderness are especially and directly applicable: “*When thou comest to the land which Jehovah God is about to give thee, there shall not be found in thee one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, that divineth divinations, and that interrogates the*

hells, or an augurer, or a juggler, or an enchanter, or that interrogates a python, or a soothsayer, or that enquires of the dead: for an abomination to Jehovah is every one that doeth these things; and on account of these abominations Jehovah thy God expels them before thee. For these nations which thou shalt possess hearkened unto those that interrogate the hells, and unto diviners: but as for THEE, Jehovah thy God hath not suffered THEE thus to do. (Deut., xviii, 9—14: A. C., 9188: see also note, page 5).

Respectfully submitted,

by direction of the Presiding Minister,

and by order and in behalf

of the Committee of Ministers,

WARREN GODDARD.

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