

SPIRITUAL TRACTS, No. 5.

CERTAINTY

OF

SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE

BY JUDGE EDMONDS.

New York:

1858.

CERTAINTY OF SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE.

CONTINUANCE OF THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN JUDGE EDMONDS
AND A DISTINGUISHED LEGAL GENTLEMAN.

—, OCTOBER 10, 1856.

DEAR SIR :

I write to thank you for the kindness and courtesy with which you responded to my communication of the 22d ultimo ; also for the purpose of replying to your request for my consent to the publication of my letter with my name, as a kind of preface or introduction to your exposition of the questions or difficulties suggested in my said letter. I consent most cheerfully to the publication of the letter, if deemed advisable by you, but without the name. I think that this would be premature on my part. It is not from cowardice or fear of ridicule. I believe I am now regarded as more than half a Spiritualist by most of my friends and acquaintances. I am, however, but an humble investigator, with no settled convictions on this subject, but with a mind certainly unsettled on all subjects of a kindred nature. I wish only truth. Of this I am not afraid, let it lead where it may. I feel that no truth can be hurtful, however it may clash with dogmas and preconceived opinions ; and of another thing I am convinced, no truth (physical, moral, or religious) can be discordant with any other truth ; and this is a consolation and an encouragement to those who investigate with honesty and intelligence. If I sincerely and honestly direct the faculties which my heavenly Father has bestowed upon me in search of truth, but should unhappily arrive at an erroneous conclusion, it can scarcely be imputed to me as a crime.

I do not, however, think that creeds should be lightly changed as one would change a garment ; and one should be cautious how he *seems to do so* before he has formed a definite judgment, lest sliding back to his former opinions, or taking others still

more novel, he should incur the character of volatility or instability

If I were to be convinced of the truth of Spiritualism, I should not hesitate to avow it, or at least, I hope I should—and I scarcely know whether I should be pleased or otherwise, to find its claims based on reality ; but I feel that I would be more than willing to embrace the truth.

O truth ! truth ! “What is truth ?” So difficult to find on earth, is it equally difficult to know what is truth in heaven ? While men are darkling after it in this sublunary sphere, is the search for it also vain for the pure and disembodied Spirits in the higher spheres ? This, to my mind, is one sad and discouraging feature in your philosophy. For I had hoped and thought (and if it is an illusion, I had hugged it to my soul), that truth vainly sought on earth, was to be found among the bright immortals. But the revelations to you and others would lead to different conclusions.

I think, my dear Sir, that your explanation of the difficulties I suggested (the discrepancies of the Spirit revelations on subjects where there should be no discrepancies) though very ingenious, to a person who stands in my point of view, is not satisfactory, and if you will pardon the phrase (not intended to be in the slightest degree disrespectful) not logical. I mean that, after conceding to you all your facts on which your explanation and argument are grounded, you explain the admitted discrepancies by the supposed different states of advancement of the Spirits who communicate (and here I would say by way of parenthesis, that independently of this new revelation I am prepared to admit and believe, that the disembodied Spirits of the righteous are at any given period differently advanced, according to circumstances, in knowledge and other attributes.) But on this earth, amid our imperfect and undeveloped race, all, however limited in faculties of mind or opportunities of observation, equally know and understand certain simple facts. Upon these all agree ; there is no discord. If the discrepancies in the Spirit teachings had appeared on subjects that were abstruse and metaphysical, the incongruity would not have been so startling.

“Providence, foreknowledge, fate and will ; fixed fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute,” these and kindred themes we may suppose that seraphic intellects might discuss and endeavor to explore, “and find no end in wandering mazes lost.” But upon a question of geography, a mere matter of locality, we find the discordances in the Spirit teachings most glaring. Where is the difference in this sphere, among *savans*, as to the geographical position of Pekin, or any other known place ? Yet this is precisely the contradiction pointed out in my last letter. The question is as to the locality of heaven, or the place where good and happy Spirits dwell. The conclave of high and holy and advanced Spirits, questioned by Prof. Hare, locate it between this earth and the orbit of the moon, that is, the seven spheres are there located ; and let it be borne in mind, that the advanced Spirits (Bacon and Swedenborg, I believe,) who being interrogated by you or some one of your circle in the same manner, replied that twice the distance of the remotest fixed star, multiplied a thousand times, would not approximate the measure of the distance of the locality of Heaven. I am writing now from memory, and may not have this teaching accurately in the very words ; but I think that I have expressed the idea substantially. I said that both of these statements could not be true. You ask me what authority I have for saying that ; that you believe both statements to be true, meaning, I suppose, that there are two localities. You ascribe the apparent contradiction to the different advancement of the two classes of Spirits who teach. If I understand the force of this argument, it amounts to this : the Spirits teach according to their own experience and knowledge, and only in that way. The intimation directly is, that the more distant locality is spoken of by the more advanced Spirits. That is a higher and a happier place. But I have not learned from anything I have seen, that Bacon and Swedenborg claim to be more advanced than some of the conclave who communicate to Dr. Hare. And if they were, and had a knowledge of ulterior spheres beyond the *seren* of Hare, it is reasonable to suppose that the advanced Spirits of Dr. Hare’s conclave had some report of these higher and more exalted states of being. There

is a teaching (somewhere to be found in your book, perhaps,) that the seventh sphere, wherever it is, is the ultimate ; and that beyond that nothing is known by the highest intelligences. But leaving that out of view, Bacon and Swedenborg, who taught the more distant locality, must in their upward ascent have passed through the lower spheres, and have had a knowledge of them from personal observation, to say nothing of a different way of obtaining that knowledge, being such high and advanced Spirits as they were. I can not see but that they should know all below them, when interrogated as to the locality of heaven ; for them (ignoring the seven sublunary spheres of Dr. Hare's conclave,) to locate it beyond the fixed stars, is to my mind, (I can make it nothing else but) a contradiction of the sublunary location. It does this by the most obvious implication. If a learner of geography were to ask where were situated the territorial possessions of the Czar of Russia ? and had an answer which included all his European dominions, but omitted his Asiatic dominions, would that be a correct answer ? Would it not, by the most manifest implication, exclude the Asiatic territory ? Would it not be contradictory to one which included the latter ? Would not there be different teachings to that scholar ? *Expressio unius, exclusio alterius*, is not simply a law maxim. It enters into the very philosophy of language, and is equally applicable to all subjects. I doubt not it holds good in the language of the angels in heaven. Suppose it were asked to name the states in the American Union, and the person questioned should enumerate the sixteen Northern, and omit the fifteen Southern States, would not this answer be false ? Upon every principle of correct construction, applicable at all times and upon all occasions, would not this convey the erroneous information that the sixteen Northern States, and they alone, composed the American Confederacy of States ? It would be vain to vindicate the correctness of the statement, by saying that it was true as far as it went, and that the States enumerated were actually in the Union. The implication is that there were no other ; and to make it true in every sense, it must be put upon the ground that the person who answered had a mental reservation which the other interlocutor

was not aware of. It is not even answering in a double sense. Pardon me for saying that the defect of your reasoning in the explanation appears to me to be of a similar character. Dr. Hare's conclave tells him that the spheres are between the earth and the orbit of the moon. Bacon and Swedenborg (one or both) say that the spheres are far beyond the sidereal heavens, and all are professing to teach the *where* of the dwelling-place of beautiful Spirits. Conceding all your *postulata*, this, to my mind, is a contradiction.

But admitting the contradictions, how are the facts to be disposed of? There is the rub. The teachings may be contradictory; they may be all false; but the question forces itself upon us, Who makes them? whence come the revelations, true or false? They are intelligible, if not true, and seem to emanate from intelligent sources. They can not come (*it seems so*) from mere matter, however subtle its forces. I am lost in wonder and amazement! I am free to say that these phenomena, viewed in any light, or however we may dispose of them, are the most extraordinary in the history of the human mind. Great results must follow, whether they emanate from disembodied Spirits or not. No candid or well-regulated mind can question the integrity of all the witnesses. If you only, or a few others, were alone the witnesses, we might without impugning your honesty, veracity, or general intellectual capacity, get over the difficulty, by ascribing the phenomena to monomania, as Swedenborg's teachings were for a long time, and with some still are disposed of. But the concurrent testimony from many and widely separated sources has assumed a magnitude and force which is not to be evaded by a philosophic sneer. Such a mode of treating the subject may and does satisfy the unreflecting and vulgar herd. But the subject merits attention, and will force itself upon the notice of the world.

Thus far I had written last night, under very unfavorable circumstances. I was here forced to stop by the lateness of the hour and the access of a morbid affection to which I am subject. On looking over the foregoing, this evening, I am forcibly struck with the imperfect manner in which I have expressed my ideas,

and the almost illegible character of the writing. And I have been strongly disposed not to trouble you with the labor of decyphering my hieroglyphics, difficult to read at all times, but more so when the writing has been executed under the circumstances that existed when the foregoing was written. I have, however, concluded to forward it to you, as you appear to take an interest in my feelings and opinions on this subject.

There is one observation I must make before I close. The teachings in your publications, as emanating from the Spirits, inculcate a morality the most pure and elevated, and a state of the affections toward God in the highest degree holy and spiritual. In these respects there are, in my opinion, no writings extant more unexceptionable. There is (as it appears to me) in the Spirit teachings much declamation and rhapsody, and they abound in generalities, which, though very good as such, convey no information.

There is very little said in this State on the subject of Spirit manifestations, and what is said is entirely in the spirit of scoffing and ridicule. I know of no confirmed Spiritualist, and but very few who have given the subject the slightest attention. There is a gentleman of some eminence in the western part of the State who is said to be a convert. The person who in my knowledge comes the nearest to that character, is an intelligent, educated and high-toned gentleman in ———, who had some remarkable experiences on this subject. He is a physician. Some of the demonstrations at his house I have witnessed. He had communication with what purported to be Spirits. Their names were always given. They communicated freely, but revealed nothing of importance. They made some most admirable tests as to matters unknown; but often made mistakes or false statements. The last time I saw this gentleman, he had given up the investigation, and was entirely afloat as to whether the demonstrations made in his presence were the work of Spirits. The Spirits, though they continued to manifest whenever invited, and breathed nothing but kindness, good will and affection, yet spoke so many falsehoods that he was disgusted with the exhibitions. He had no confidence in any thing they communicated;

and on being asked for explanations as to their false statements, they could give no explanation.

But I must cease to trouble you with my crude thoughts and imaginings on a subject which has engaged so much of your attention, and upon which you are so well informed that what I have to say must appear trivial. If leisure serves you, I should be pleased to hear from you at any time upon this interesting theme. I am, Sir, with great respect, yours, etc., ———.

HON. J. W. EDMONDS, NEW YORK.

REPLY OF JUDGE EDMONDS.

NEW YORK, *December 14, 1856.*

DEAR SIR :

I know you will excuse the long delay in answering your favor of the 10th of October, and I will therefore waste no words in apologizing, but content myself with assuring you that it has not arisen from any want of inclination on my part.

Plunging then *in medias res*, may I not ask if you are not too impatient in your search for the great desideratum—the Truth? There is no short-cut to knowledge. It has to be toiled for, from our A B C's to the great question, What is God? It is by slow steps that we attain the truth. Think how many centuries elapsed before the truth of our planetary system came to us! and finally it came through much persecution, and as the result of the observations and speculations of thousands of years. And so it has been with all the great truths of Science which we now receive. But have we yet received all the truths, even in relation to the material world, which Science can yet attain to? We are not authorized to say so. Why, even Newton's attraction of gravitation, which was proclaimed by him as a cause, it is now insisted, is but an effect, and therefore there is a truth yet to be discovered behind and beyond it. How many new planets belonging to our system have been discovered within the past fifty years, which were before unknown to us! And how many ages passed before we learned the fallacy of the long received maxim, "that nature abhorred a vacuum!"

These things were truths as much a thousand years ago as they are to-day, and it was our incapacity which retarded our knowledge of them. It was our fault, and not theirs, that they were not truths to us at an earlier period.

It is the same with moral as with physical truths. It is only as our capacity to receive them advances, that they come to us.

Cast your eyes back upon the world when Fetichism was the religion of man. He then worshiped stocks and stones, because he was incapable of appreciating a divinity, divested of material attributes. He could not comprehend an invisible, omniscient Deity. The idea was simply an absurdity to him, and he rejected it of course.

The fire-worshiper who succeeded him, began to worship the cause rather than the effect.

The ancient mythology began to comprehend the idea of an invisible existence, but it received not the thought of a Great First Cause.

At length man was prepared to receive the revelation of one God over all. Yet mark how difficult it was for him to comprehend it! It came with many marvels; yet we do not learn that even darkness over the whole land, or the destruction of all the first-born of Egypt, worked conviction in a single mind. Even the Israelites had to pause in the wilderness until an entire generation had died out, before they would receive a truth which now our youngest children acknowledge.

And so, when man had so advanced that he might receive the truth of his own immortality, behold! how difficult it was for him to receive it. Socrates in Greece, and Jesus in Jerusalem, fell sacrifices to the promulgation of this mighty truth.

And now that two thousand years have rolled on, behold how few among the nine hundred millions of men on earth are prepared to receive the great truths which you and I acknowledge, namely, the existence of one great Jehovah, and man's immortal destiny.

Why is it that you and I, even in childhood, received as truth that which the wise and the learned of antiquity rejected

as fables? Because time had made its impress upon the race as well as upon the individual.

But everywhere with man, in all ages and in all conditions, time and progress are essential elements in the dissemination of truth, and its reception by him.

Do you ask why I thus gravely dwell on these truisms, with you? It is because being truisms, we may learn the application of them; and by applying them to the revelation of spiritual truths, we may see why it is that the dissemination of such truths, even now, and when descending from so high and holy a source, should be so slow in progress—so difficult, so full of anxiety to us, and yet so certainly attainable in the end.

Let us not, then, marvel that Truth is so hard to get at; and let us so learn to discriminate that we may be able to determine whether the obscurity which disturbs us is owing to a spot on the sun or a cloud around the beholder.

If, then, these things are true, they may be as much so in the present as in the past—in regard to individual man as to the race. Let us see if they will not explain the difficulty to which you refer, as to the locality of Spirit residence.

I do not understand that the Spirits who teach Dr. Hare, as to the sublunar locality, do say that there is no other home; and most certainly those who have taught me as to the far distant locality, have not said so.

It is not, therefore, what they do teach, but what they do not teach, that is the cause of the difficulty; and because they who are teaching Dr. H. in regard to the earthly spheres do not stop in the midst of their teaching, to exclude a conclusion by telling him that there are other localities beside, where Spirits dwell.

Pardon me for saying I do not think this is sound reasoning; and marvel not that I say to you, that even on the bench I could not see the philosophy of the maxim *expressio unius, etc.*

It may sometimes be true that the expression of one idea excludes another; it may indeed often be a just inference to draw, but its universal application can not be sound. A child is asking you what are the countries on the face of the earth? You begin by describing to him the Western Continent; and

then, deeming that he has got as much as he can then grasp, you pause for a while and wait for his mind to be prepared for further teaching. Would it not be lamentable for that child to infer then that there was no other continent?

Thus Dr. Hare has all his life long been an honest, sincere, but inveterate disbeliever in the Christian religion. Late in life Spiritualism comes to him, and in a short time works in his mind the conviction of the existence of a God and his own immortality. So far his Spirit teachers have already gone with him. But he still denies Revelation. He is as sturdy and sincere now in that denial as he ever was. Will it be just to conclude, because his Spirit teachers have not yet brought him up to that point, that therefore there is not and never has been a Revelation?

If there was no other teaching of spiritual truths but Dr. Hare's, or even if his professed to teach the whole truth of Spirit existence, there would be more room for the argument. But even then the position would be precisely that which the theologians of to-day so pertinaciously assume, namely, that the revelations through Christ are plenary—a position which has been immensely mischievous in retarding man's spiritual progress. But there are other teachings beside the Doctor's, and his do not profess to cover the whole ground.

The other teachings disclose to us who they are, who—for a while at least—are confined within sublunary distances, and why they are so. They also disclose to us other states of Spirit existence, far more elevated and refined than can be consistent with any earthly or sublunar habitation, whose radiance and beatitude are far beyond even the comprehension of those who are yet so earthly as to be bound down within its influence.

The locality of such a state of existence, in the boundless realms of space, I for one, do not pretend to understand. How can they to whom space is nothing, and whose rapidity of motion lags not "behind the celerity of thought," convey to me an adequate idea of distance in their sphere of life? And how could I understand them, when I can not grasp with a proper comprehension even the distance of Saturn or Herschell? I can

approximate to a comprehension, by imagining how long it would take a cannon-ball or a railroad car to traverse the distance ; but even then I am lost in the immensity of the idea.

Why then attempt to teach me what I can not comprehend ? They are not so superfluous. Already have I learned so much that is far, far beyond what I formerly dreamed was possible, that I pause and say, How boundless is thy realm, O, truth ! and how eternal must be the search for it, with the immortal intellect !

Already have I been taught so many things beyond the power of language to describe, or even of my mind to comprehend, that I pause on the threshold of knowledge, in breathless awe, and await the time when the spark of divinity that is within me shall be so developed and enlarged that I may begin to grasp the mighty truths which are ever rolling round me in His illimitable kingdom.

Let me suggest to you one idea which will tend to show you that the teachings of Dr. Hare did not intend to exclude other localities.

We are taught by science that the countless worlds which roll in space, must be inhabited by sentient beings. We are now taught by Revelation that it is so, and that those beings, differing as they may from us and each other in their development, are, like us, destined for immortality. Now what is their condition after death ? Are they, too, confined within the sublunary distances of this, one of the least considerable of those worlds ? Yet *expressio, unius, exclusio alterius*, carried out, would have it so. Surely the argument drawn from that maxim can not be sound, which conducts us to such consequences.

I have thus in a measure amplified the idea which I but suggested in my former letter. Whether I have done so satisfactorily, I leave to your better judgment, confident of the result in a mind so candid and intelligent.

Thus far I have dwelt upon the difficulties and uncertainties of Spirit communion, and have endeavored to convey the idea that it is only by the use of our own reason that we can arrive at results ; in other words, that we must deal with this revelation

in the same manner that we have dealt with those through Moses and the Prophets who succeeded him, and through Jesus and his Apostles, and that we can take nothing "by authority" without a sinful surrender of our own independence of thought and the responsibility that belongs to it.

Now let me pause a moment, to mention to you some of the important truths which we can and do obtain through this communion, in spite of all its contradictions, and amid all the incongruities which, although they disturb us, must, it seems to me, be inevitable.

I have now been six years engaged in these investigations. I have been blessed with most favorable opportunities for investigation; I have been witness to very many things, not one ten thousandth part of which has yet been published. I am almost daily enjoying the communion, and daily learning some new truth, or receiving confirmation or explanation of some already given. I am thus taught that there is no end to the knowledge which can thus be communicated to us, and that with all my advantages I am but on the threshold of this new knowledge.

My conclusions must therefore be drawn from many facts not as yet within your reach, or which have not yet come to your knowledge; but they are facts, to the knowledge of which all can attain; for it can not be supposed that I have any peculiar privilege that can not be enjoyed by all mankind. All may know what I know; all may witness what I have witnessed. And now, what I mean to say is, that to all such, when they do thus know and do thus witness, these truths are demonstrated.

Most fully do I accord with you in the opinion that they are most important to man, and do "inculcate a morality the most pure and elevated, and a state of the affections toward God in the highest degree holy and spiritual."

These are the truths I mean:

1. That man during his earthly existence can have communion and direct intercourse with the Spirits of those who have, like us, lived the earthly life, and that not only with those who, when on earth, were near and dear to us, and who can return to assuage our grief by their presence, but with those who have

passed away ages ago, and who can return to us and impart to us the "new knowledge" they have acquired during those ages of their Spirit existence.

2. That that knowledge is not confined to matters connected with this earth, as a material world; or to its hidden or forgotten things, but may extend to the constitution and organization of the countless worlds that people space, and to the laws which govern them, from their first formation to their highest state of perfection.

3. That in this manner, man's ultimate destiny can be revealed to him, and the condition of his existence after this earth-life.

Hitherto it has been revealed to him simply that he is destined to live forever; but what that existence was, has been concealed. Now it can be revealed to him, with all its conditions, and what are to be his occupations and employments there.

4. That the character of man's future, whether for good or ill, whether happy or otherwise, is in a great measure dependent upon himself—at least dependent upon himself and his surroundings; that he must work out his own salvation, and he can not devolve that task upon others, nor can he cast upon others the responsibility that belongs to him of performing his duty of obedience to the laws of his great Creator.

5. That the great law of man's existence is progression. As his body is the result of progression from inert matter to the living moving animal, so his soul, which is the emanation of the divinity within him, must progress from the cradle to eternity and that progression must be in the elements which will liken him to the divinity whence he has sprung.

6. That all mankind are members of one great body, as the leaves and the limbs are parts of the tree. They are bound to, and connected with, each other by indissoluble ties, and progression must be of the race as well as of individual man.

7. That man is endowed with all the attributes which are necessary to enable him thus to progress. Some of them are yet dormant, yet are capable of being drawn out by proper

cultivation, as we are able to read by cultivating the power within us.

8. That among those attributes which are capable of cultivation and action even in this life, are : the power of Spirit communion ; of seeing and hearing spiritual things without using the material organs ; of knowing the thoughts of our fellow-man even in his earthly tabernacle ; and of prophesying as to the future.

9. That progression must begin in this our primary existence, and if omitted or neglected here, it is far more difficult to begin it hereafter.

10. That man passes into the Spirit-world morally and intellectually, as he is here ; that if he is perverted here, he is so there until his great destiny of progression shall begin. While thus perverted, he can commune with us on earth, and we are ever surrounded by such, and susceptible to their influences.

From this source come the inner and often mysterious promptings to evil, which all of us at times experience, urging us to do, even against our own will, what we know to be wrong. And now that the source of this evil is revealed to us, so it is being revealed to us how we can resist and overcome it, and how we can effectually guard against its effect upon us.

These are the mighty truths which spiritual intercourse teaches us. They are demonstrated to us, in a manner and with a force and clearness that no sane mind can resist ; and they come to the enlightened intellect with irresistible conviction.

But they come to us, by means of evidence flowing through human channels ; and like all human testimony, they are attended with difficulties and dangers which are sufficiently annoying, but are not insurmountable.

Patient, calm and intelligent inquiry cannot fail to produce such results. Anything short of that can not be satisfactory, and may often be dangerous.

Fanaticism is always mischievous. Undue excitement is always hurtful, and they are none the less so in Spiritualism than they are in any other religion ; but with us they are easily overcome, for we are ever taught that it is our reason that is addressed, and that its calm exercise alone can enable us to perform our whole duty wisely and well.

I am, very respectfully, yours,

To ———

J. W. EDMONDS.