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CHRISTIANITY VERSUS SPIRITUALISM.

A

DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN FRANKLIN,

FEBRUARY 24, 1856.

BY

SAMUEL HUNT,

PASTOR OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY C. C. P. MOODY, 52 WASHINGTON STREET.

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NOTE.

The local allusions, in this discourse, render necessary a word of explanation. It was called out by the debate in the Lyceum, on the question : “ *Is modern Spiritualism worthy of our confidence and belief?* ” The affirmative was sustained by professed Spiritualists from abroad, who avowed sentiments so hostile to Christianity, that some public notice seemed to be demanded. To rebut some of the confident assertions they made, to disprove some of the sentiments they advanced, but more especially, to present an outline — and only an outline — of the argument in defence of the Christian scheme, is the simple design of the discourse.

As it was prepared in great haste, I have ventured to modify and expand some of the sentences and paragraphs; although, for “substance of doctrine,” it is the same as delivered. I have also inserted a few foot notes, and some additional matter in the way of an Appendix.

DISCOURSE.

JOHN vi. 66-68. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then Jesus said unto the twelve: Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

IN the recent discussion, and exhibitions, of Spiritualism, in this place, among other sentiments, avowed by its advocates, were the *four* following points:

1. Spiritualists have no *creed* but universal Truth, and that according to the dictates of each one's *individual* Reason.

2. The Bible is not to be received as final authority in matters of religious belief.

3. Jesus Christ was not *divine* in person; nor was his death to be regarded as an expiatory sacrifice for sin.

4. The doctrine of the future and final salvation of all men.

As Spiritualists recognize no creed, and no individual or individuals as *authority*, it is possible, that all may not be willing to endorse these points, as they stand; although I may add that, so far as my observation and reading extend, I have found none who would deny, that these are items in their belief. Indeed, I think I may safely assume, that these are the sentiments generally put forth by those who speak and write in defence of the system.*

Before proceeding to a consideration of the truth contained in the text, it may be well to prepare the way somewhat by

* See Appendix A.

their brief consideration. And here let me bespeak a candid hearing, by the explicit declaration, that I mean to attribute to the system, or its advocates, no sentiment that is not freely avowed. I mean simply to take the views they express, and make such deductions as the *truth* will both warrant and demand. Of this they surely ought not to complain.

1. And first, concerning the sentiment, that they have no other creed than the dictates of each one's *individual* Reason, I remark, that, although it is one easily announced and specious, it may be, to some minds, yet it implies a position surrounded by thick darkness and inextricable difficulties. For at the very outset we are confronted with the fact, that it is a conclusion which very few of the human family have ever reached, or been satisfied with. Not only have we the fact that Christendom, protestant and catholic, have looked to a *revelation* for religious truth, but all the *false* religions of the world have their sacred books, from which are to be derived the sentiments of their respective beliefs. The Chinese have theirs, which they believe came from the skies; the Hindoos have their Vedas and Shasters, the gifts of their imaginary deities; while Mohammedans have their Koran, which their great prophet gave to teach them the way to Paradise. Now, how strange it seems, if our Maker designed that our Reason should be an all-sufficient guide in matters of religious faith, that not one in a million should have been satisfied with it. With all man's perverseness, I wonder he should have proved himself *so* perverse. Carrying within him this "inner light," this "spiritual insight," this "touchstone" of all truth, it is passing strange, that he has *never* deemed it satisfactory until modern Spiritualism has dawned upon the world. If, too, as contended, the doctrine of the native depravity of the human heart must be discarded, to which evangelical Christians are accustomed to refer so much of man's strange conduct upon religious subjects, it seems to me more unaccountable still, if Reason be a sufficient guide, that the race have so generally and so persistently remained in ignorance of it.

Besides, it seems a pertinent question to Spiritualists, if their supposition be correct, why there is need of any revelation at

all — even their own pretended spiritual communications? Or, what can be the practical benefit, when, as they freely admit, the Spirits themselves are often wicked, false, and unreliable? If Reason is the umpire, why not throw the whole responsibility of concocting her own schemes of religious truth, as well as deciding upon them? Why go through the form of listening to the pretended utterances from the spiritual world, when, after all, every thing must be referred to the arbitration of our own judgment? Why not allow Reason to act independently of all interference? Drawing from the resources of her own “spiritual insight,” why not give her the work of devising her own system of truth, forming her own rules of conduct, and not only mapping out man’s future state, but indicating the path that shall lead, in safety, to it? Why not? “Because,” you say, “that is simple Deism — that is launching the soul upon the dark waters of *scepticism*, without chart or compass. And *fallible* as human reason proves itself to be, in its differing and discordant views, upon matters of earthly concernment, where we have the light of present observation and the aid of our own experience to guide us — or upon *religious* subjects, even when men pretend to go to the Bible, which contains but one system, and presents, for our reception, but “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” — no rational man would regard it competent, unaided by a revelation or light from another world, to conceive of, or rightly unfold, the facts and features of a future state, or the true and safe way of approaching it. Nor can I regard the chances of success greatly increased, when we are called upon to select, what is right and true, from the mass of these pretended communications, so often, as their advocates admit, false, foolish and unreliable. At any rate, it is contrary to all my conceptions of the God we worship, to suppose, that He would give us immortal souls of such make and might, and then leave us so profoundly in the dark, both about their conduct here and their destiny hereafter.

2. Concerning the *second* point, the denial of the “plenary” inspiration of the Scriptures, so that they cease to be final authority in matters of religious belief, the same general train of remark would be pertinent. “All that is true in the Bible,”

said the speaker, "I believe came from God ; but I do not believe that, all is true that may be found in the Bible." How, then, is man to know what is true and what is false ; or how is he to separate the one from the other ? "By bringing it to the touchstone of my Reason," he replied ; "what is reasonable I will receive, and what is unreasonable I reject." Of course, then, as a book of rules, a collection of statutes, it ceases to be a matter of *authority*. If a rule chances to seem "unreasonable," — and we know how great is the influence which the passions and appetites, prejudice and self-interest, exert upon the decisions of the judgment, or Reason — it is rejected, and set aside as of no authority. Of what value is such a book, of doctrines to be believed, or duties to be practised ? Not the value of the paper on which it is printed. The thing, that binds the conscience (if bound), is Reason, not Revelation. The individual obeys a rule of conduct, not because it is *scriptural*, but because it is "reasonable."* If the Revised Statutes of this Commonwealth should be placed in my hands, and I should be told, that what seemed reasonable to me I might regard as *law*, but what seemed unreasonable I might reject ; of what value would its perusal be ? And should I presume to violate some of its statutes, on the ground, that they were unreasonable, would a judge or jury admit such a plea as a valid defence ?

"But am I not to use my Reason in matters of Religion ?" you inquire. Certainly ; on no subject is there greater need of its exercise. But it should be confined to its proper sphere, and not be called upon, or allowed, to usurp prerogatives that are not its own. Its sphere is well defined and twofold. First it is to decide upon the truth or falsehood of any real or pretended scheme of religious faith. The world is full of such schemes ; and it is the province of Reason to decide between

* "According to your way of proceeding," says Augustine, who wrote in the fourth century, "the authority of Scripture is quite destroyed, and every one's fancy is to determine what in the Scripture is to be received, and what not. He does not admit it, because it is found in writings of so great authority ; but it is rightly written, because it is agreeable to his judgment. Into what confusion and uncertainty must men be brought by such a principle."

their conflicting claims ; and each individual must decide for himself. No man, or class of men, has a right to decide for us what scheme we shall, or shall not receive. We may allow the opinions of others to influence us in forming our own, but it must be as an opinion, and not as *authority*. And when we have decided upon this important question, then it is Reason's prerogative to decide *what that scheme contains* — what it teaches and what it requires. If we receive the Christian scheme, and believe the Bible to be the Word of God, then our business is simply to ascertain what the Bible teaches. Reason's prerogative is simply this ; and not to sit in judgment upon the obvious teachings of this previously acknowledged text-book of our faith. It is simply ridiculous for a man to profess to receive a volume, as the true and authorized expounder of religious doctrine and duty, and then bring the teachings of this volume to the test of his own Reason, with the understanding, that he shall receive nothing which it does not approve. For then, as I remarked above, it is his Reason, and not Revelation, that decides what he shall receive and what he shall reject — a position which is tantamount to no *revelation* at all. As in the illustration of the Revised Statutes, I am to exercise my judgment in deciding whether or not the volume, placed in my hands, is what it purports to be. Deciding this in the affirmative, all that remains for Reason to do, is to ascertain, by the ordinary laws of language, what the statutes are, which it contains. They may seem reasonable, or unreasonable, without in the least affecting the question of fact.

Let us, however, look at this matter from another point of view. If a *plenary* inspiration cannot be predicated of the Bible, then none of it can be consistently received as inspired. This appears from its very structure and composition. Its writers claim that they are inspired — that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” and urge, as proof, the fact, that they were enabled to work miracles. They say, too, that “*all* scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Now this is either a fact, or it is not a fact. If it is a fact, then the “plenary” inspiration of the Bible is established, and all of it must be received, whether it seems reasonable to us or not.

If it is not a fact, then the sacred writers are guilty of the most arrant falsehoods, and have forfeited all claim to be believed, as to *anything* they may have recorded. They were either fools and fanatics, and were imposed upon, or knaves and hypocrites, and testified to what they knew was false. On either supposition they would be unworthy of all credence upon matters pertaining to so important a subject as our religious belief. But Spiritualists deny the doctrine of plenary inspiration — contend that “miracles are an impossibility,” because, as Andrew Jackson Davis asserts, “the laws of Nature cannot be suspended, transcended and destroyed,” and that the ancient prophets were in no wise inspired differently from the pretended mediums of modern days. No wonder then, that they deny so many of the leading doctrines of the Christian scheme, and scout with so much contempt the divinity of Christ and his mission, and the final punishment of the wicked; for there is, in the former, mystery, and in the latter much that is repulsive to him who is determined to continue in his sins. It is but a logical deduction from premises so untenable.

But the question now arises: What has become of Christianity, after this elevation of Reason above Revelation? If the former, and not the latter, is the touchstone of our religious belief, if miracles are an impossibility, and prophecy nothing more *in kind* than what is vouchsafed to the thousand “circles” of the present day, then we may well inquire: Where is our Christianity? These are certainly very different sentiments from those generally entertained by the Christian community of the present or the past age. What are they? How shall we designate them? Webster defines Infidelity to be a “disbelief of the inspiration of the Scriptures, or the divine original of Christianity.” Now, putting this definition by the side of the avowed sentiments and principles of Spiritualists, wherein do they differ? They both agree in what Webster defines to be the distinctive feature of Infidelity, a denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures. And this is in accordance with the common usage of language. Lord Herbert in England, and Thomas Paine in this country, were always called infidels, not because they denied the being of a God, or the immortality of the soul

—for they both believed in these doctrines—but because they denied the inspiration of the Scriptures.*

Now I am as well aware as any one else, that hard words prove nothing and convince nobody ; and I would not use them, if for no other reason, for the sake of expediency. But language has its laws and the authority of usage. And when an individual, or class, answer a description formed according to these laws and usage, no harm is done if the fact be stated and the proper designation given. Indeed truth, and the interests of truth, demand it. Christianity should not be held responsible for the conduct or opinions of those who deny its fundamental principles. Nor, on the other hand, would any ingenuous mind wish the appellation of Christianity, who is not satisfied with its evidences. “Infidelity,” says Webster, “is unbelief in the inspiration of Scripture.” If one does thus disbelieve, does he not occupy the ground of Infidelity? And why should he shrink from the *name* after he has embraced the thing?

For surely, if men are not afraid to discard the belief of Christianity itself, they ought not to be afraid to discard its name, or be over sensitive, when Christians apply to them the same appellation which has always been applied to those entertaining similar sentiments. The reality is that from which they ought to shrink. It is the denial of the divine authority of the Scriptures, or writings of those holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, or placing them on a level with the

* Paine’s belief, as stated in his own words, is as follows : “I believe in one God, and no more ; and I hope for happiness after death. I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duty consists in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy. . . . My own opinion is that those whose lives have been spent in doing good and endeavoring to make their fellow creatures happy—for this is the only way in which we can serve God—will be happy hereafter ; and that the very wicked will meet with some punishment after death.”

When the speaker, in the debate the other evening, repelled the charge of *infidelity*, and gave us his belief, it was, in substance, simply, *that he believed in the being of a God, and that He was the author of all truth, and in the immortality of the soul,*—not so much resembling the Christian belief as that of Paine ; and yet Paine, by common consent, is regarded an infidel, while he who gave this bald and meagre creed, indignantly repelled the charge that he was one.

pretended communications of modern mediums, that should be feared. When men can discard the sentiment that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," — a sentiment that has guided millions, in all ages of the church, in what has seemed to them the paths of truth and safety, in Time and towards Eternity; which has been the dominant element in the civilization of the most enlightened ages of the world's history — in their laws, customs and general literature — they have discarded what the Christian church has ever looked upon as the fundamental principles of Christianity. It is an unreasonable, though significant, reluctance, when they are unwilling to have their conduct called by its right name. The fearful, fatal mischief is accomplished, when the soul, swinging loose from its moorings, launches forth on the dark and stormy waters of scepticism, with nothing to guide or protect — sure, with all its freighted hopes for eternity, to go down in darkness and woe.

It is this view of the matter that renders the subject appropriate to this time and place. It is the fact, that, while Spiritualism is vaunting its rapid progress and boasting of its increasing numbers, the conviction is forced upon us, that it is but another name for Infidelity. If those interested in these strange phenomena had contented themselves with regarding them as simple manifestations of a psychological character, that could, or could not be explained upon scientific principles, I would have been content to allow the thing to work itself out, without, at least, any public notice. But when I find that, almost universally, they who adopt these views soon lose their relish or regard for the ordinary truths and exercises of our holy religion; when they speak reproachfully of its claims, and deny its authority; when its advocates declaim boldly, even within these walls, consecrated to its service, that all that is in the Bible is not true; that its writers were no otherwise inspired than are the mediums of the present day; when, too, with a show of learning, it is assumed, as if an admitted fact, that it is full of mistakes, and unworthy of implicit credence, until Reason shall endorse its teachings; when, too, we are challenged to receive the new system, with the vaunted claim, that "to

investigate is to believe," — then I feel myself called upon to examine, in some degree, the subject thus forced upon us.

And, at the outset, I wish this congregation and community to understand fully, that, to receive Spiritualism, as explained and defended by its advocates, is tantamount to a rejection of Christianity. If they receive the one, they must reject the other. On this point they are, of course, free to receive or reject what they choose. As religious freedom is guarantied to us, they may become believers in Hindooism, Mohammedanism, Mormonism, or Spiritualism, if they choose. But they cannot believe in either of these and Christianity too. They cannot discard the doctrines of the latter, deny its duties, and make a mock of its sacred claims with one breath, and consistently demand, that they shall be called by its name with the other. I shall not deny the singular phenomena on which Spiritualism bases its claims, nor attempt to account for them.* Others have satisfied themselves that they can be accounted for. But I shall not enter upon that point now. My only purpose is to show that we have not yet seen enough to justify us in discarding the Bible from our belief, or permitting any other system to take its place. Men, as I have said, may choose as they please, or as the weight of evidence seems to preponderate ; but they cannot have both. Neither, as I have said, in my opinion have we yet seen anything to justify us in leaving the old path, and entering the new.

These considerations, which have seemed necessary to prepare the way, bring us to the sentiment of the text. In consequence of the Saviour's discourse upon the spiritual nature of his kingdom on earth, many of his disciples left him, and walked no more with him. They had been influenced by worldly considerations in their professed adherence to him. When disappointed, by the spiritual representations which were too impalpable to their material notions, they renounced a service that presented no charms to them. Jesus said unto the twelve : " Will ye also go away ? Will ye forsake me, and thus renounce all the blessings which I have promised ? " To this inquiry Peter, with his usual promptitude, replied : " Lord, to whom shall

* Appendix B.

we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” So I would say, when asked to give up my confidence in Christianity and its divine Author, for these pretended communications, so often confessedly false, profane, and unreliable; “Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” If I give up Christ, as set forth in the gospel, I give up the corner stone of all rational hope — the only anchor of the soul that is sure and steadfast.

The idea that underlies the text, as it is the theme of my discourse, is the following proposition: *Christianity is the only system of Religion that is worthy of our belief and confidence.*

I. *This appears from its peculiar adaptedness to man's nature and condition.* This, of course, is opening a wide and fertile range of remark, for which I have little time or space. I can only hint at some of the leading points of general consideration upon this branch of the evidences of Christianity.

1. Christianity, allowing it to be worthy of belief, presents us a system of harmonious truth, which can be found nowhere else. Beginning with the creation of the world, and the origin of man, it presents a brief, but connected view of the human race for four thousand years, while the earliest profane history can hardly be said to date back farther than the seventh or eighth century before the Christian era; while much of the early centuries of this is enveloped in the uncertainty of fabulous and traditional conjecture.* And not only do its sacred books give us that history, but it gives a *key* to that history, in the Fall of man in the garden of Eden, and the mode of his recovery as presented in the great Plan of Redemption. And not only is the Past thus unfolded to our view, but the lamp of Prophecy shines into the darkness of the Future, revealing to the eye of faith, in glorious perspective, the scenes and events which are yet to dawn upon the world, in bright contrast with the dark and gloomy path the human family as yet have trod. There are indeed mysterious, dark points, not yet revealed; and human curiosity, balked in her eager search into the causes of

* The Olympic games were instituted 776 B. C. Varro says, that this is the point, where the “fabulous period ends and the historical time begins;” although Herodotus, who is styled the “Father of Grecian History,” did not live till more than three centuries after this.

things, becomes impatient of that reserve which God has exhibited in not revealing those secret things which belong alone to Him. And yet, compared with any other *pretended* revelation, ever made to man, how like noonday to midnight are his thoughts and views, who walks in the light of Christianity, compared with his, who, shutting his eyes to this, seeks for knowledge from any other source.

2. Christianity presents rules of life, adequate to the demands and necessities of both worlds. It not only gives us a system of Truth, but it provides a system of *morality*, that meets most exactly the exigencies of our present and prospective being. This was ever a standing problem with the philosophers of pagan and classic times: What are the proper rules of life? How shall man act, to provide most successfully for this world, and that which is to come? And they toiled long and earnestly and with unsatisfactory results, until Plato, the wisest of them, despairing of success, advised his pupils to wait until a "teacher should be sent from heaven," who should instruct them on points, they could not understand. At length, four hundred years after Plato, Jesus Christ came—that Teacher from heaven—and gave, or rather endorsed, a system of morality that has challenged the admiration of *infidels* themselves. It would be easy to gather panegyrics of this morality and its Teacher, from Christians. But that would receive little heed from those who deny the authority of even the Bible itself. Permit me, then, to quote from the writings of two individuals, more notorious, perhaps, than any others in the annals of Infidelity itself—Paine, of this country, and Rousseau, of France. Paine, in the first part of his "Age of Reason," after giving his religious belief, to which I have before referred, thus speaks of Christ: "Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind, . . . *and has not been exceeded by any other.*" Rousseau is more explicit and elaborate. "I confess to you," he says in a letter to a friend, "that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence upon my

heart. Peruse the works of your philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible they are, compared with the Scriptures. Is it possible a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage, whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? . . . What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses!" He then compares Jesus to Socrates, and adds: "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction. On the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ."

"Strange language," you will say, "for an infidel;" and yet Rousseau, strongly and beautifully as he endorses the historic credibility of Christianity, refused, in *practice*, to govern himself by its requirements. Why? "He loved darkness, rather than light, because his deeds were evil." He was a profligate in heart, mind and manners, and so refused to follow to their legitimate conclusion the convictions of his judgment. Still his admissions are good authority, as to the point in question.

But I go farther. The morality of the Scriptures is not only unexceptionable in its precepts, challenging the admiration and assent of even its bitter opposers, but it comes to us armed with *power*. Unlike the speculations of Plato, Socrates, Seneca and Cicero, which were beautiful as mere specimens of human ingenuity, which men might praise and yet disregard, because they came without authority, the Bible comes clothed with the fearful sanctions of Eternity. It is *law*, not merely precepts. It is made up of the statutes of a sovereign, whose prerogative it is to reward for obedience, and punish for disobedience, and not merely the speculations of studious minds, who could mark out what seemed to them expedient, although they had no right to present them as matters of obligation. But, as with the Israelites, so with the believers of Christianity, blessing and cursing are placed before them, and its awards of right and wrong conduct are as weighty as eternity can ren-

der them ; the wages of sin being eternal death, but the reward of the righteous being everlasting life. Can any one fail to see that this is a most important feature of the morality of the Gospel ? *

Nor this alone. According to the Christian theory, there is provided, for those who will accept it, in the prescribed way, a *spiritual* power, that shall enable the truly pious to conform their conduct to their convictions. It is no uncommon thing, in this world, to find human theory and resolutions far in advance of any disposition, not to say ability, to perform. This was the sad infirmity, the fatal defect, in all the teachings of the ancient philosophers. They gave reasonably good rules and precepts ; but, as I have said, they were unaccompanied by any sanctions adequate to their enforcement. And, what was more defective still, they could devise nothing to rectify what was wrong in the natural heart — nothing to slay that “specific repulsion” to truth and right of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God ; neither indeed can be.

This infirmity is provided for and this difficulty is overcome in the Gospel “plan of salvation.” The Holy Spirit is given to regenerate the heart, and, by the proper use of the means of grace, to aid in the progressive work of sanctification, until the believer is brought into the more full and perfect liberty of the sons of God. At least, such is the theory. And in the successive ages of the Christian church, thousands and millions have professed to be the subjects of such a work. They have *felt*, that spiritual power had been given them, such as no human contrivance or provision could afford ; and they have exhibited such fruits as no other appliances have been able to secure. Has it all been a delusion ? Have they all been either fanatics, and deceived, or knaves, deceiving others as to the alleged real-

* “The members of civilized society can, in all ordinary cases, judge tolerably well how they ought to act ; but without a future state, or, which is the same thing, credited evidence of that state, they want a *motive* to their duty ; they want, at least, strength of motive, sufficient to bear up against the force of passion and the temptation of present advantage. Their rules want *authority*.” — [*Paley's Evidences of Christianity*.]

ity of this change of heart? I know there has been, and is now, much hypocrisy and false profession in the church. Such indeed, it was predicted by the Master himself, would be the fact. But have all the bright and honored names, which have adorned the history of the church and the world, who have made this profession, been either deceivers or deceived? Is it not a heavy draft on your credulity, thus to believe? But it has been a delusion or deception, unless Christianity is what it professes to be, and the doctrine of the new birth and a spiritual experience — as held by evangelical Christians — are a blessed *reality*. But if they are a reality, then they become, of themselves, a most convincing *internal evidence* of the truth of the Christian scheme.

II. That Christianity is alone worthy of belief and confidence appears from the *external evidence of its truth*. There is a very prevalent idea in the community, that it is optional with us, to receive or reject Christianity, as our humor or caprice may prompt; that all that is necessary for an individual to do, is to say he doubts the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and, for him, they cease to be authority. And so he has a certain right to reject the evidences of his senses — to disbelieve that the sun shines, although he sees it; that the wind blows, although he feels it; that his house is in flames, although he must know that they are rapidly accomplishing their work of destruction. He has this right, and no more.

The question of the truth of Christianity is a question of *fact*, not of humor or caprice. Our wishes have nothing to do with it. If Christianity is true, it is a fact, not a sentiment. If the Bible is worthy of credence, it is so because its writers lived and wrote and worked miracles, in attestation of their mission, and not because its believers can see, or cannot see through everything connected with it; nor because they can understand or cannot understand all the difficulties, or answer all the hard questions that may be proposed concerning it. As men believe in the commonly received doctrines or theories of *gravitation*, *electricity*, *magnetism*, and the *tides*, because they think the weight of evidence is in their favor, as facts, and not because they can answer all the questions, or solve all the difficulties

connected with them, so men should believe in the truth or divinity of the Christian religion, because, in their opinion, the weight of evidence is on its side. The practical question is : What evidence have we, that the Bible is what it professes to be — the Word of God ? I, of course, cannot go very fully into this matter, but will very briefly indicate the line of argument that has satisfied the minds of believers upon the subject. The argument is twofold — that which proves the *authenticity* of the sacred Scriptures, and that which establishes their *credibility*.

By the *authenticity* of the Scriptures we mean their *genuineness*, or the fact, that they were written *when*, and *by whom*, they claim to have been. Sceptics sometimes tell us, that we have no good evidence that the Bible is what it professes to be. “Cunning men,” it is said, “wrote them, and palmed them off upon the credulity of mankind.” What evidence have we that they are not correct ? We have not the original manuscripts. How do we know, that we have accurate copies ? Your patience would be exhausted by even a brief summary of the argument. I will state, however, that these are points and objections which have been made, argued, and subjected again and again to the closest scrutiny. Incredible labor has been expended upon it by the defenders of Christianity, stimulated to the most vigorous efforts, and compelled to be faithful and honest by the violent and persistent attacks of its enemies. Not a position could be held, unless fortified by arguments that Infidelity itself could neither gainsay nor overthrow.

And besides this constant and captious watching of infidels, there have been the Jews, who, bitterly opposed to Christianity, would speedily detect and expose any attempt to meddle with or alter anything, at least in the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible, which every minister has in his study, agrees with the Hebrew Bible which the Jew reads in his synagogue. And that our Hebrew Bible is the same with that, which was in use in the Saviour’s time, is proved from the fact of its essential agreement with the Septuagint, which was the Hebrew translated into the Greek before the time of Christ, from which both the great Teacher and his disciples quoted ; proving, most incontestably, that our Old Testament is the same with the Jewish Scriptures,

and that, they were in existence at the time of Christ and his apostles. Indeed, the hostility towards Christianity has been so great and rancorous, that it seems morally impossible, that its sacred writings could have been foisted into existence and public notice, only at the time in which they were professedly written; or that any material change could have been made in them. Indeed Paine, in a work designed to prove, that what are called Messianic prophecies, or those predicting the person and advent of Jesus Christ, are wrongly interpreted, proceeds upon the assumption, that the Scriptures, in which they occur, are genuine, and written by those whose names are prefixed to them; proving that, with all his disposition to destroy the Christian religion, he did not dare to deny the *authenticity* of the Old Testament writings.

Concerning the authenticity of the New Testament, there is less difficulty of finding corroborative evidence, in the constant reference to its contents by the early Christian, and profane, writers, even of the first, second and subsequent centuries of the Christian era. Every writer is referred to, and copious extracts are made from them, rendering it morally certain, that such writings were in existence at the time claimed, and were written by those to whom they are generally credited. It is incredible, the amount of labor expended on this single department of proof. I will give a single illustration. During the first part of the last century, Dr. Lardner, a distinguished clergyman of England, being disabled from public speaking, betook himself to the single work of reading these early writers, and culling from them every passage, that referred to, or was an extract from, any of the writers of the New Testament. Having access to the best and most extensive libraries, he was enabled to do the work so thoroughly, that little additional effort has been necessary in the same direction. He was engaged thirty years upon it, and, as the result of his toil, published *fourteen* octavo volumes, made up of these extracts and references. It has ever been regarded as an absolute Thesaurus of this kind of sacred literature.* It is entitled: "The Credibility of the Gospel His-

* Gibbon, the infidel historian, thus alludes to Dr. Lardner's labors, in connection with an early writer and bitter opposer of Christianity: "Fabricius and Lard-

tory.” So careful and thorough have been these researches ; and so certain does it appear, that the writings, which compose our Scriptures, are *genuine and authentic* ; and so rashly as well as ignorantly do they decide, who say, that the Bible was written by designing men, long after the time in which it purports to have been composed. So true is it, as Rousseau has said, that “the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ.”

But if the Bible is authentic, it must be *credible*, or worthy of our belief. It is a most unreasonable and violent supposition, that such facts could have been recorded and published, *as having occurred at the time in which the record is made, unless they actually did occur*. The impossibility of any such collusion may be readily apprehended, by conceiving of the probable success or failure of an attempt to palm off such a history upon the inhabitants of Massachusetts and Boston, as a faithful record of events, which had taken place here during the present generation. Is it not obvious, that such an attempt must prove abortive ? * And this, in addition to an equal seeming impossibility, how men could deliver a system of truth and morality so pure, benign, and adapted to man’s necessities, as to carry the conviction to almost every one, that it is superhuman, and yet be guilty of such outrageous falsehoods, so astounding an imposture, as they must be, if the facts are not as they pretend.

ner,” he says, “have accurately compiled all that can now be discovered of Julian’s work against the Christian.” — [Hist., vol. iv. pp. 81.

* “The books of Scripture,” says Augustin, “could not have been corrupted. If such an attempt had been made by any one, his designs would have been prevented and defeated. His alterations would have been immediately detected by many and more ancient copies. The difficulty of succeeding in such an attempt is apparent hence, that the Scriptures were early translated into divers languages, and copies of them were numerous. The alterations, which any one attempted to make, would have been soon perceived ; just, even, as now, in fact, lesser faults in some copies, are discovered by comparing ancient copies, or those of the original. If any one should charge you with having interpolated some texts alleged by you as favorable to your cause, what would you say ? Would you not immediately answer, that it is impossible for you to do such a thing in books read by all Christians ? And that, if any such attempt had been made by you, it would have been presently discovered and defeated, by comparing the ancient copies. Well, then, for the same reason that the Scriptures cannot be corrupted by you, neither could they be corrupted by any other people.”

But if the Scriptures are historically true, they are *doctrinally* true, and all they contain must be received ; for the miracles which are recorded must be a divine endorsement of all that is revealed. For we believe, as Nicodemus declared to the Master himself : “ Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher sent from God, for no man can do these miracles, that thou doest, except God be with him.” This, then, is the argument. There have lived men, in former centuries of the world’s history, of pure and unblamable lives, according to the testimony of their enemies, who promulgated a system of Religion, original in its general cast and character, sublime in its doctrines, and pure in its morality, — a system, for the utterance of which they were inspired of God. This is their claim. In its support, and in attestation of the fact, that they had God’s authority for what they said, they wrought miracles, which, as Nicodemus declared, *no man can do, except God be with him*. Now, if we cannot escape the conclusion, that these writings are *historically* true, there is no logical escape from the conclusion, that the *doctrines* are equally true, which are recorded by the same pens. And there is no more reason why we should refuse to receive any fact or doctrine, here revealed, because it is mysterious or repulsive, than that we should refuse to receive any fact or item of intelligence in science, or common life, because we would not, or could not, see that it was either reasonable or desirable. There are indeed, in Revelation, dark points and things hard to be understood. And are there not in the realms of Nature and Providence ? Yet, you do not reject things in the latter, because you cannot understand or relish them. Nor is there any more reason why you should in the former. Nor will you find any more *safety* in such a rejection, for such a reason. You may do it ; but you do it at your peril — for you are trampling under your feet those laws of evidence and language, which are as fixed and authoratative as the Law of God itself.

And here let me say a word about our common version of the Scriptures, familiarly called “ King James’s Bible.” It was said, in the debate, that if our Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament are reliable, our English translation is not ; and

instances were cited of alleged mistranslation. I have only time to say, in connection with this remark, that we have this evidence of its groundlessness; that all denominations of Protestant Christians, evangelical and liberal, however much they may differ from each other on other points, agree in retaining and using our common version. If so faulty, why has not some one of them sought to strengthen its position by providing a translation, more nearly correct? Noah Webster, some years since, prepared a new, or revised, version of the Bible. But his alterations, profound linguist as he was, were confined to words and phrases, that have lost their original significance, by the gradual changes of language, and those, that could be substituted for others, on the score of delicacy. But his attempt never attracted much attention, and his version is now seldom called for. There have been those, among the Baptist denomination, who have favored a new translation, for the sake of substituting words, for baptism and its cognate terms, that should more nearly represent their views upon the subject. But that number is far from being a majority of the denomination. If "King James's Bible" were so far from reliable, it is certainly strange, that it should maintain its position so persistently in the popular favor.

In addition to this branch of the external evidences of Christianity, which the *miracles* and *prophecy* constitute, every year is bringing to view new facts, which are corroborative of those statements given in the Scriptures, about which profane history is silent. I have remarked, that the latter extends back scarcely three thousand years, so that the Bible becomes the only written account of the first half of the world's history. But the Bible does not stand alone. Among the *ruins* of those countries, in which occurred the events recorded in it, are constantly coming to light something to substantiate the sacred narrative. Layard, in Nineveh, Lieut. Lynch, by the Dead Sea, and antiquarians among the monuments of Egypt, have discovered relics and traces of facts, which, recorded on the pages of the Bible alone, present to the studious and Christian mind, increasing evidence of the truthfulness of the Scripture narrative. In a word, as prophecy has been styled a

“growing miracle,” so, I may add, do the recent researches, in Assyria, Judea and Egypt, present a *growing* argument to the historical truth of Christianity.

Nor does the *general assent*, of the wisest and best of those, who have adorned the annals of Science, Literature and Statesmanship, seem to me an unworthy argument in defence of the Christian scheme. Every man is indeed responsible for his own opinions, and should be fully persuaded in his own mind upon the subject of his religious faith. Yet, when we remember the vastness of the subject, taken in connection with the extent and violence of infidel objections, with the fact, too, that many, in the ordinary walks of life, may find it difficult to master the whole argument, each for himself, it certainly is a fact, of some significance and importance, that such men as Locke and Boyle, Pascal and Bacon, Newton and Milton — without their peers in the realms of Philosophy and Poetry — have not only received Christianity as true, but have brought to its defence and exposition, their largest resources of mind and learning. When we read the confession of Bacon, called the “father of Inductive Philosophy,” ascribing, with the simplicity of a child, all his hopes of heaven to the sufferings of Christ; when we see Newton, having astonished the world with the range and depth of his researches in Science, devoting the close of his life, with all the resources of his knowledge, and the severe discipline of his mind, to the composition of a Commentary upon the Book of Daniel, it certainly seems true, that men of smaller minds, fewer opportunities, and little careful examination of the subject, should be modest in the expression of their opinions, especially when they come in direct conflict with those so much more profound. If England’s sweetest poet, alluding to these facts, could sing:

Learning has borne such fruit, in other days,
On all her branches : Piety has found
Friends in the friends of Science, and true prayer
Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dew.
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, childlike sage,
Sagacious reader of the works of God,
And in his Word sagacious. Such, too, thine,
Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna ;—

then 'tis a rash word he speaks, as it is a rash act he puts forth, who denies the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and looks for religious truth, to any other source. For

III. Finally, it appears that Christianity is the only system worthy of our belief and confidence, *because no other system can establish like claims on our belief.* Paley begins his Treatise on the Evidences of Christianity, with these words: "I desire, that, in judging of Christianity, it may be remembered, that *the question lies between this religion and none*; for, if the Christian religion be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will support the pretensions of any other." By this he meant, that, if the Christian religion cannot be sustained by fair argument, neither could Mohammedanism, or any form of Paganism. And in this I presume we shall all agree. Nor will any one, before me, be any more ready to endorse the claims of Mormonism, which has sprung up since Paley wrote. And, with this remark, I dismiss them from farther notice.

Within some five or six years, a new claimant has been presented for our suffrage. This claimant is modern Spiritualism. As defined by its advocates, it is, for substance, as follows: — *They, who have passed through the hour and article of death, are allowed and enabled to communicate with the living, through the agency of mediums; whose communications are not only equal to the Bible, but of greater authority; as indeed, they are destined to introduce a new and purer dispensation than the Christian scheme.* In other words, it is opposed to Christianity, and seeks success by supplanting it in the affections and confidence of the community. Its advocates deny its fundamental doctrines, forsake its ordinances, make a mock of its claims, and scatter, broadcast, the elements of popular distrust and scepticism. And we are asked to receive the new faith, as our religion, to guide us in Time and save us in Eternity. To this demand I respond, by saying that, in my opinion, it does not present sufficient claims to merit such confidence. Among other reasons I note the following:

1. *Its antagonism to Christianity.* If Christianity is true, Spiritualism is false. But from the argument, I have now so

briefly sketched, it appears that we have abundant evidence that Christianity is true. Spiritualism then, as expounded by its principal advocates, must be false. They both cannot be received as worthy of our belief.

2. Again, Spiritualism does not meet the necessities of our nature and condition. Unlike Christianity, it gives us no connected system of *truth*. Indeed, it is admitted, by its most prominent advocates, that its communications are often false and contradictory, so that, as revelations of *truth*, they are altogether unreliable.

Nor does it provide for us a connected and well-digested system of *morality*. On the contrary, it inculcates doctrines fearfully loose, and demoralizing in their tendency. There are some wise and good sentiments in these pretended communications. But they are only such as we have often had presented before, and such as might be gleaned from any respectable treatise upon morality. But with the borrowed gold there is an immense amount of original alloy. They have much to say of love and purity; but it is oftener license than love; while the principal aid, that purity receives from its teaching, is the denial of the doctrine of future and final punishment, and the comfortable assurance, that when we die, whatever may have been our character and conduct here, we shall, at once, when we enter the Spiritual world, "be drawn upward towards God."

3. No reasons or arguments are presented at all commensurate with such a claim. What are they? Some strange and hitherto inexplicable phenomena have been observed. To account for them, the *theory* is formed, that *departed spirits* are the active agents. But it is *only* theory, not yet certainly established by a full observation and collation of all the facts that must be necessary to render it worthy of our unquestioning belief. What have we? Harmony, or agreement, in the pretended communications? By no means. "Confusion worse confounded" appears in most of what is thus revealed. Not only are there "profane and lying spirits," ever ready to obtrude their *false* sentiments; but even when there is a semblance of candor, there seem to be radical differences in the details of the pretended facts concerning the place and employ-

ments of the future world. Nothing would be more hopeless, than an attempt to concoct a consistent and harmonious scheme of truth — of the facts and features of those pretended “spheres,” of which we hear so much. Nothing like harmony can be found.

Has the theory stood the test of *time*? Have the pretended facts been so long observed, so carefully examined, and patiently analyzed, that the conclusions drawn must command assent? Only some five or six years have been devoted to the subject. All, that has been observed and collated, has been compressed into a space so brief. And for this, with all that is false and conflicting, unsatisfying and unreliable in its communications, we are called upon to give up the Christian scheme, venerable with the hoar of ages, and glorious in its revelations — so sublime in its doctrines, and pure in its morality, as to transcend all human compositions, and challenge the admiration of infidels themselves — sustained by an array of evidence that has convinced the wisest and best, of all ages, of its truth, while it has cheered, by its promises, millions who have *felt*, that there was power in it, to guide them in life, support them in death, and provide for their future exigencies beyond the grave. Can effrontery go further?

Especially is this question pertinent, when we bear in mind that many, who have examined the subject and admit the reality of its alleged phenomena, find a satisfactory solution, by referring them to certain occult, but natural laws, which, it is believed, exist, but which have not yet been reduced to system. Some of the soundest and most reliable individuals, who have investigated the subject, have come to the conclusion, that not only is there no necessity of resorting to a “spiritual” agency, to account for the facts in the case, but that there are insuperable difficulties that lie in the way of any such reference. Such are some of the reasons that satisfy my mind that Christianity is the only system of religion that is worthy of our confidence; and, of course, *a fortiori*, that Spiritualism has failed to substantiate its claims to our belief. I have necessarily presented but a summary of the argument; and yet it seems to me that I have so clearly indicated the line of evidence, that no one, with

an honest desire to arrive at the truth, need to be misled. I shall close with two or three brief inferences.

1. We see *why we must receive the whole of Christianity, or none of it*. It is very fashionable, among a certain class, to profess a belief in Christianity *as a system*, and yet reject its essential elements and truths. They are willing to believe in some of its more glorious revelations, its promised bliss and sustaining hopes, while its more repellant truths, its doctrines, "hard to be understood," its self-sacrificing duties, are disregarded and cast away. But, from considerations now urged, there can be no ground for such a discrimination, nor any safety, more than reason, in it. The Bible is so constructed, that there can be no confidence reposed in any of its teachings, unless in all. Its writers claim to be the historians of certain facts, said to have taken place — the heaven-appointed *amanuenses* of certain truths, which God wished to communicate to man. If these facts did take place, then God was with them, for they are such *miracles* of power, that none could have wrought them, except as God had worked in them. But it is incredible, that God should have thus aided them in what they did, unless He was willing to endorse what they said. But if He did, then we must receive what they wrote as true — all true. If He did not, then they are *false* witnesses, and should not be believed in anything, at least as *authority*. There may be truths in their writings, correct moral precepts ; as there are truths and right sentiments in Paine's "Age of Reason." But as these do not hinder this from being a book of infidel principles, and not to be received as authority on religious subjects ; so, if there may be correct moral precepts in the Bible, it will not follow, that there is any *authority* in its teachings, because the men, that wrote it, have borne testimony to the truth of so much which, according to the terms of the supposition, is *false*. In our civil courts, men, convicted of *perjury*, are not allowed to give testimony, even on the comparatively unimportant matters of common life ; shall we regard, as worthy to give instruction on the momentous concerns of the immortal soul, those who are so false and *perjured* as the sacred writers must be, if *all* Scripture is not given by inspiration of God ?

2. *We see the serious step he has taken, who denies the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.* It is no uncommon thing for individuals to express their doubts concerning the paramount authority of Christianity, as a rule of faith and practice ; as if all its teachings need not be believed, its precepts obeyed, or its warnings heeded. They coolly and flippantly talk of its inconsistencies and mistakes, and of the folly and superstition of being in bondage to the "letter" of its requirements ; with no seeming conception of the terrible destruction he would occasion, who destroys the hold of the Bible upon the conviction and conscience of an individual or community. He is indeed impotent for its entire dislodgment from individuals or society, for its truths and hallowed influences are so mingled with the current thought and civilization of the age, that man cannot, if he would, envelope himself in the thick darkness of perfect *Scepticism*. Faith, in other hearts, if not his own, will shed some light and warmth around him, scatter some blessings in his path, and surround him by some influences, for which he so ungratefully denies his obligations to the only source from which they spring. But so far as he is able, he closes the Bible and shuts out from human view all that it reveals — its wonderful truths, its pure morality, its glorious hopes — brands all its believers as hypocrites or enthusiasts — and traces all its benign and transcendent influence, upon the history of Christendom, its customs, maxims and laws, to what, in his esteem, is no better than a gigantic imposture. So far as his opinions, followed to their legitimate results, could effect it, he would verify, in fact, the fancy of the "Blank Bible," and would make, as reality, what he saw, in the visions of his sleep, who *dreamed*, that in a single night, the contents of every Bible, and every quotation, thought or fact found in it, and incorporated with other works, were blotted out, and, in their stead, was nothing left but a blank, a fearful hiatus.

And what have we in return ? The *gibberish* of Spiritualism — the pretended communications through *mysterious raps* and *tipping of tables*, as if the God of heaven would communicate the truths, essential to the guidance and safety of immortal souls, through modes so whimsical and puerile — so unreliable

and contradictory, that one of its advocates has left on record his testimony, that, "from four hundred sittings, or circles, he only received some ten or twenty sentences of love and wisdom" — so little valuable, that, one had said of them, that "all that is true, is old, and all that is new is false."

And yet there are those who are willing to throw away all that is good and glorious — all the garnered treasures of hope and happiness, which the Scriptures have given us, for the pretended communications from another world, of those who seem to have no power to make any really valuable communications concerning this. When Dr. Kane was shut up amid the rigors of an Arctic winter, and was pursuing his adventurous and heroic course from his abandoned vessel, why did not some Spiritualist, who professes to know so much about the *upper* "spheres," deign to give some information about this, that should have relieved the doubts, and guided the efforts of anxious friends? And now, why does not some one, so gifted and inspired, that he would have us believe what he reveals concerning those who have entered eternity, give us some reliable information concerning the missing steamer *Pacific*? But on all such points, of real utility, where there is a chance to verify their "revelations," they are *dumb*. And yet we are told, that there are millions believing in the system, and trusting to the communications of the "spirits," about another world, who know so little about this. If this is not bartering gold for dross, the riches of wisdom for the essence of folly, will some one tell us what is?

If men wish to be *sceptics*, or deny the doctrines of grace, as held by evangelical Christians, they may do it. But they are mistaken, if they hope to strengthen their position by a resort to any such belief as this. Its tendency will be to sink, rather than sustain them, in their error.

3. *We see the importance of being well grounded in the truth.* We should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us. Too much of the belief of our churches and Christian communities is traditional and unthinking. Too many believe in the truth of the Bible, and in evangelical doctrines, because their fathers did, without understanding, as fully as they should, the

grounds of their belief, the arguments upon which it is based. The arguments are clear and irrefragable, but it requires thought and study fully to embrace them. When that thought and study are not bestowed, there is danger, if assailed by the arguments of error and the claims of delusion, that the unfortified will fall before the power of temptation, and yield assent where firm resistance should have been encountered. It is no new thing for Christianity to be assailed, and the Bible denied. That has been done during all the ages of their history. And the arguments, which are sometimes employed by the unthinking and ignorant now, have been urged and refuted, again and again, until Infidelity, routed from all her former subterfuges, has been driven to this last resort — to admit the Bible as a whole, and deny its parts ; to profess a belief of Christianity, as a system, and yet reject its essential elements and truths.

Let it not be forgotten, that Infidelity is Infidelity, whatever may be its name, and whatever the garb in which it appears. It may be grateful to the natural heart to discard from human belief some of the hard doctrines, the self-denying duties, and the fearful threatenings of Holy Writ. But remember, that the same stroke, that banishes them, sweeps away all the glorious doctrines, the grateful provisions and precious promises it affords. And remember, too, that he who builds not “ upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,” — leaves for himself no other than a foundation of sand, which the first passing storm shall sweep away.

APPENDIX.

A.—Pp. 1.

In proof of the general *anti-Christian* tendency of Spiritualism, I present the following extracts from some of their more prominent writings. In the writings of *Andrew Jackson Davis*, occur the following sentiments:

“The time has come for Reason to mount her throne, and judge the religious world universally. It is the only true master.”—*The Great Harmonia*. Vol. II. pp. 93.

“On the contrary, I not only find the “sacred volume” of christians replete in the demonstrative illustrations of *spiritual insight, good clairvoyance, and practical inspiration*; but I also find multitudinous examples and demonstrations of analogous phenomena in the *Koran* of Mohammed; in the *Zinda Vesta* of Zoroaster; in the *Shaster* of Brama; in the *Talmud* of the Jews; and in the more recent *Roll* of the Shakers—yes, in each of these “sacred volumes,” I find incontrovertible evidences and indications of the mutual manifestations under present consideration.”—*The Great Harmonia*. Vol. III, pp. 28

The writer, it will be perceived, places the Bible on the same level with the “sacred books” of Hindoos, Mohamedans, &c., &c.

“So when Jesus changed water into wine, he simply exercised a magnetic power, which was practiced centuries before, and which is now the commonest manifestation of human magnetism.”—*Ib.* Vol. III. pp. 33.

Adin Ballou thus writes:—

“Whatever of divine fundamental principle, absolute truth, and essential righteousness, there is in the Bible, in the popular religion, and in the established churches, will stand.”—“*Spirit Manifestation*,” pp. 86.

Here the implication, of course, is, *that there is something beside truth* in the Bible that will not “stand.”

“As to the heresy of the spirits,” it seems to consist chiefly in discarding the heathenish notions of a partial, vindictive God; the endless, useless torment of sinners in hell; the existence of a Deific Devil, always opposed to the universal Father; and the unalterable moral condition of spirits in the next world. On these articles the spirits are very heterodox.”—*Ib.* pp. 88.

No one can fail to perceive the *animus* of the above extract, and its radical hostility to evangelical Christianity.

In the *New England Spiritualist* of March 1st., there is an article on “plenary inspiration” In it occurs sentiments like the following. “To assume to know that the doctrines contained (in the Bible) are infallible truth, is to assume that man is infallible in determining such infallibility.” * * * It can be infallible to him only who is infallible to perceive it meaning.” * * * The words and sentences of the Bible are no more than the words and sentences of any other book, any further, than they awaken higher perception of truth, have deeper meanings and awaken truer thoughts, ideas, &c.” * * * “All disputation about the inspiration of any individual or any book, amounts to nothing so far as making that individual or book authority for truth.”

APPENDIX B.—Pp. 11.

The explanation of Pres. Mahan is generally known. He, admitting very fully the alleged phenomena, accounts for them by the existence and action of an agent which he styles the "Odylic Force," a "force identical with the cause of all the mesmeric and clairvoyant phenomena on the one hand, and with the immediate cause of these demonstrations on the other," leaving "the *hypothesis* of Spiritualism wholly unsustained by any valid evidence whatever." Submitting his facts and arguments, "to a large number of the first thinkers, clergymen and laymen in the country," for their inspection and judgment, he says, that he has "yet to meet the first individual who has thus heard, and with us admits the facts of spiritualism, that the mystery that has hitherto hung round those manifestations is now satisfactorily explained." As a matter of *opinion* such testimony is certainly worthy of our careful consideration.

Miss C. E. Beecher, in her recent letters to the people on "Health and Happiness," after giving some account of her *special* efforts to witness and investigate the phenomena in question, thus propounds her *theory*: "The nervous fluid is generated in the brain by our *will*, and can be directed by the will to the different parts of the brain and nervous system. It can also be directed to the brain and nervous system of *other* persons by mesmeric passes. By this process the fluid sent forth from the magnetic accumulation in the brain of the magnetized person, very much as electricity accumulates in a Leyden jar.

On this condition the magnetized person has the intellectual power considerably stimulated, and certain new powers brought into action, which an *abnormal* opium and alcohol, ether and chloroform, produces similar exaltation.

When the brain is thus exalted by an excess of nervous fluid, it becomes highly sensitive to a magnetic or electric fluid that *pervades all space*, and, by this means the brain comes into the same relation to this medium as the eye holds to *light*. That it is in this state the mind *perceives* by the instrumentality of this all-pervading medium, as through the eye it perceives by means of light.

In this state also the brain of the magnetized person becomes so united by this medium, to the brain of other persons, especially to that of the magnetizer, as to have access to the knowledge and memory of other minds. Thus aided and guided to the will of the person, who is in magnetic connection, the clairvoyant *can see with the brain*, by the aid of that pervading medium, and to a certain extent, can come in connection with other places and other brains at great distances.

In this state, also, the magnetism has a certain power on the intellectual faculties, the senses and susceptibilities of the magnetized person, so that by an act of will, he can stimulate any one of them. Thus, he can not only make the subject see, feel, taste, and smell whatever he chooses, but can regulate his intellectual *opinions* and *belief*, so long as the magnetic influence remains. This power, in certain cases can be exerted over the subject *at great distances*.

This nervous fluid can also be sent from the brain of one or more persons into *inanimate objects*, and, after a certain accumulation, the objects become animated for the time being, and more or less subject to the will of the person who most freely imparts the magnetizing fluid. In this way, chairs and tables can be made to move about, *to spell*, and perform other apparently intelligent actions.

In this condition, the brain of the persons who regulate these developments, often act on the inanimate objects, while the owner is *unconscious* of the operation he is performing."

It is not necessary, nor is it my purpose, in quoting this opinion, that I should *endorse* it. I simply bring it forward as an illustration of my remark, in the discourse, that many, believing in the phenomena, account for them in some other way, than by referring them to the agency of the "spirits"—also, as a refutation of the speaker's frequent assertion, during the debate, that "to investigate is to believe."

In this connection it may not be inappropriate to quote the following letter from Henry Ward Beecher, who thus disposes of the charge, frequently made, that he is a believer in Spiritualism. In the *N. Y. Independant*, of March 20th, after admitting that there are curious and surprising phenomena witnessed in "spiritual circles, quite worthy of scientific attention and investigation," he adds:—

"But I am a stout unbeliever in the spiritual origin of these phenomena, either by good spirit or bad spirits, or any spirits whatever. This testimony I have borne again and again, in private and in public, by speech and by pen. And they who represent me as believing in modern spiritualism, do so without any warrant whatever in the truth. The substance of the "communications" have quite turned the stomach of my faith. Nor do the results of such faith in others incline me to it, for,

"Although many sincere and excellent people do believe in modern spiritualism; and although there may be some who have been brought by it to a belief of the Scriptures, yet, in so far as I have had opportunities for observing, it has seemed to weaken the hold of the Bible upon the conscience and the affections, and to substitute diluted sentimentalism and tedious platitudes instead of the inspired truth. And the general adoption of the modern spiritualistic doctrines, I should regard as no better than a march of Infidelity in the garments of Faith. Without doubt, those who have represented me as a spiritualist, have done so honestly; but without any foundation, in fact.

Truly yours,

H. W. BEECHER."

APPENDIX C.

"Of all the paradoxes humanity exhibits, surely there is none more wonderful than the complacency with which scepticism often utters its doubts, and the tranquillity which it boasts, as the perfection of its system. Such a state of mind is utterly inconsistent with the genuine realization and true hearted reception of the theory. On such subjects, such a creature as man cannot be in doubt, and really *feel* his doubts without being anxious and miserable. When I hear some youth telling me, with a simpering face, that he does not *know* or pretend to *say*, whether there be a God, or not; or whether, if there be, he takes any interest in human affairs; or whether, if He does, it much imports us to know; or whether, if He has revealed that knowledge, it is possible or impossible for us to ascertain it; when I hear him further saying, that, meantime he is disposed to make himself very easy in the midst of these uncertainties and to await the great revelation of the future, with philosophical,—that is, being interpreted—with *idiotic* tranquillity. I see that in point of fact, he has never entered into the question at all; that he has failed to realize the terrible moment of the questions (however they may be decided,) of which he speaks with such amazing flippancy.—*Eclipse of Faith*, pp. 31.