



HUMAN IMMORTALITY,

AND KINDRED TOPICS,

VIEWED IN CONNECTION WITH

MODERN SPIRITUALISM

AND ITS PHILOSOPHY.

BY

WILLIAM SMITTON.

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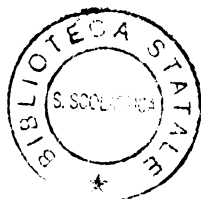
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**"TRUTH WEARS NO MASK; BOWS AT NO HUMAN SHRINE; SEEKS NEITHER  
FAVOUR, PLACE, NOR APPLAUSE; SHE ONLY ASKS A HEARING."—  
R. P. JOURNAL.**



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## HUMAN IMMORTALITY, &c.

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OF the many questions that have engaged the human mind in all ages, none is more momentous, and none, save perhaps the being of a God, more difficult of solution than the question of a future state.

We discover the vast importance of the subject in the fact that in it is bound up not only the immortality of man, or, at least, his continued existence after death, but, so far as our cognitions go, the very being of a God besides; while the difficulties that attend its solution as a positive truth, arise not so much from the intrinsic magnitude of the problem—for it is simply one of evidence—as from the insufficiency and peculiar uncertainty of the data bearing thereon—which insufficiency and uncertainty are due to our total non-experience of a life *without* the body, if such there be.

Man is placed in a boundless universe of stupendous forms and phenomena, which universe necessity compels us to accept as the eternal and infinite manifestation of an Infinite and Eternal Principle of Life or Intelligence that is confessedly possessed of every possible power and excellence; and which men for their own convenience have variously termed, "God," "Jehovah," "Allah," "Brahma," "The Great Spirit," etc. What this Principle, conscious or unconscious, individualised or unindividualised, essentially is, in His nature and attributes; what the mode and manner of His existence; how or why He came to exist without an antecedent cause, thereby forming—if we may so express ourselves—not only the Great Eternal Cause but also the Great Eternal Effect,—for we think He

is both;—the utmost mental efforts of the strongest and most philosophic thinkers have as yet utterly failed to comprehend. Eternity and Infinity almost crush us to the dust; and although sometimes man fondly imagines that he has gained some faint idea of their nature and reality, at other times, while contemplating them, consciousness itself is like to be swallowed up, so severe is the strain upon the faculties. Essential existence—existence without a beginning, and, consequently, without a cause—is the Gordian knot that laughs—yes, laughs—to scorn the puny strugglings of undeveloped man to unravel its windings and trace them to their source. Far beyond the ken of deepest human thought sits the awful Goddess robed in light too dazzling for mortal to gaze upon. Will she ever deign to break the silence of her mysterious court and inscrutable reign? Will she ever descend from her impenetrable throne to enlighten the anxious, enquiring minds of her own children? Rather, I should say, will man, the finite (finite only in a sense), reach a stand-point, a mental platform, sufficiently exalted to catch and understand the tones of the Infinite Voice that speaks and thunders throughout all spheres and all ages; that writes its thoughts on the scrolls of Infinitude, and shadows them forth on every page of this fair world? We know not positively, but something within the vasty deep of the soul—call it intuition, or the awakening of the eternal mind to a consciousness of its infinite powers, or what else you please—whispers “yes.”\*

To return. Man is not merely *in* the universe, he is unmistakeably a *part* of the universe. He is linked to the animal kingdom by many ties. He eats, he sleeps, he lives and dies, just as they do. At the same time, he occupies the highest and most distinguished place in the scale; nay, he stands forth to human knowledge as the topmost step in the ladder of creation—a ladder which has its origin in the mists of an eternity we cannot fathom.

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\* Man is infinite, inasmuch as his powers are capable of eternal progression—of unlimited expansion. His soul is the seed-germ of infinite possibilities. Whence those unconquerable desires to know the origin of being? Are they not the uprisings of the soul to *know itself*?

Ceaseless change is, moreover, going on in this universe. The whole is but one vast piece of mechanism, ever changing and ever the same—one huge machine, subject to the action of inflexible and unerring laws; and man, as being a part of the machine, is also under the control of those laws. He comes into being, soul as well as body—provided he has a soul—through their operation. He plays his part in the grand drama never once relaxed from their grasp. For, if we behold—as behold we do—the laws of growth and decay, of waste and supply, of life and death, at work in the lower creation, we see them equally active and powerful among the human species, even though that species be the crown and flower of all. Man feels hunger, and requires nourishment. He feels weary, and needs rest. After passing through the various stages of infancy, youth, and manhood, his outward organism—that which common observation and experience recognise as the man—begins to decay. The body presents visible evidences of approaching dissolution. Slowly, but none the less surely, the process, caused and regulated as it is by natural law, goes on without intermission, until the mechanism, exquisite and perfect though it be, entirely breaks up. The wheels of life have run out, and the material form has returned, or begins to return, to the elements whence it originated, just as do the outward forms of every other animal, to be used up in the formation of new organisms—thereby repeating the endless cycle of creative being. Nothing is lost; nothing annihilated.

Such, without dispute, is the mysterious process daily and hourly being carried forward through universal nature, and wherever humanity exists, under the action of omnipotent and inexorable laws that know—and rightly know—no difference between man and beast, peer and peasant, savage or saven.

At this point the inquiry arises—and it is one fraught with all-important issues to every member of the race—Does there exist in man an indestructible, though invisible, principle of life that survives the break-up of the body—maintaining both its identity and consciousness in another sphere; which principle really is the conscious, rational

agent that exists as man and as a distinct individuality in this infinite and eternal vortex of forms and phenomena? Does that which men in their ignorance misname death only free the soul from its outer and grosser garment, admitting the man at once to a higher life and a far more glorious universe?

At the outset, let us ask—What is implied and contained in the theory of a future life? Nothing less than the existence as distinct individuals at this moment of every man, woman, and child that ever lived on earth—back, back through periods baffling calculation. What! the countless myriads upon myriads of human beings of every nation, kindred, and tongue of the world's history still alive? How vast the idea! How grand, how overwhelming the thought! Man is lost and bewildered when he attempts to grasp it. The news at first sight appears startling; at a second, it seems too good to be true (to quote a common phrase). It so utterly transcends all comprehension that we can only bow, wonder, and adore; standing paralysed, almost terror-stricken, at the greatness of the universe in which we dwell and exist.

We speak, and speak truly, of the extent and vastness of this present world, with its teeming populations, reaching from pole to pole, and sea to sea—

“ From Greenland's icy mountains,  
To India's coral strands; ”

but how immeasurably, how incomparably vaster and grander must be that world where dwell eternally the unnumbered and innumerable hosts of humanity that have laid aside these mortal robes and been arrayed in the garments of immortal youth!

We boast, and that justly, of our Newtons, our Shakespeares, our Miltons, our Bacons, that have left behind them works and memorials which can never grow old, and that have enrolled their names high on the scroll of Fame; we glory in all those Philanthropists, those Reformers, those Martyrs for the sake of truth that have been the morning stars of the race; we love to think of the Philosophers, the Poets, the Orators, the Artists that have adorned humanity and proved the divinity of the soul;



yet how far short must each and all of these come of the moral and mental giants, the spiritual heroes that live and act in the spheres beyond death and the grave! Nay more, who shall relate the triumphs or conceive the attainments of these same intellects, now that they have added centuries of experience to their earth-life, and are emancipated from the trammels of mortal flesh? In view of this, and postulating the truth of our theory, who shall measure the capabilities of the human intellect? Who shall dare circumscribe the circle of human knowledge? Who shall say what is possible, and what is not to the mind of man?

Well may the poets, Oriental and Occidental, sing of the glories of a future state. Well may they exhaust simile after simile, metaphor after metaphor, and revel in the realms of imagination when endeavouring to describe it. Yet must the boldest conceptions, the noblest eloquence, the most gorgeous language, infinitely fall below the reality.

To continue. Account for it as we may, man's belief in a future state, a future place of punishment and reward, is almost, if not altogether, universal. We find it obtaining among all nations, savage or civilised; and pervading all religions, ancient and modern. The most learned and the most ignorant alike believe it. Yes; man's aspirations point to the sky. Even the most degraded not unfrequently feel their power, and long for a home of purity and peace. In short, go where we will, still do we find man asking the question—"Am I mortal or immortal?" "Do I live after death in another sphere, retaining the same faculties, feelings, and desires as I have now?"

Nor is it only at lengthened intervals that these thoughts come up. On the contrary, they scarcely ever leave the contemplative mind. They visit it in the stillness of midnight, when all around is hushed to repose; they are pressed upon its notice during the bustle of noon,—in the heat and turmoil of city life.\*

Strong and yearning beyond measure are man's desires after a future life. They go down to the foundations of his being, and form the prop and lever of his existence on

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\* This may possibly be due to a power *out* of the individual mind. Who will enlighten us?

earth. Cheered by the prospect of a blissful immortality, men are willing to fight life's battle, to trudge earth's pathway, to meet every difficulty and every trial, neither fainting nor repining. They are ready to endure wrong and contumely; to suffer persecution, and death itself.

Are those hopes delusive? Have man's longings for continued existence after death no rational, reliable basis; no substratum of truth whereon they rest? In other words, can our question be answered in the affirmative or not? If it can, then such a result will stamp man with unspeakable dignity, and hold out a future of inconceivable glory to the human family. Life no longer will be an enigma—at least looking forward.

Now, at this stage, it strikes me that if we could but gain a thorough insight into the *origin* of man's beliefs; could we but arrive at a certain estimate of their nature and value, see whence they spring and how they are built up; could we properly and satisfactorily distinguish between the *innate* and *acquired* ideas of the mind—although in a sense all these ideas must be *innate*; we would thereby be able to demonstrate the truth of a future existence from the very universality of man's belief in that existence, and the immortality of the soul would thereby be placed upon a logical basis.\*

But in the present helpless state of human science and philosophy—helpless when they attempt to deal with the spiritual—the immortality of man is a thing incapable of proof. (We meantime exclude the revelations of Modern Spiritualism.) Human reason and knowledge, so long as they are tied down to the outward world and its experiences, are powerless to grapple with the problem. The future world is not an object of sense to the vast majority of mankind, if to any; and the human mind is constitutionally averse to believe in a world it never beheld, or a state it never experienced. This aversion is both right and natural. Would that in other matters it were more acted upon!

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\* If man's propensity for religious worship be held indicative of the existence of a *God*, then, upon the same ground, must this belief be taken as indicative of the existence of a *future state*.

Glorious as is the prospect of immortal life ; dear as are the hopes of a happy home beyond the Mystic River, after life's cares and toils are ended ; strong and universal as are man's yearnings after continued existence out of the body ; we are therefore forced to acknowledge that human philosophy and human science are unable to establish the truth of the theory. The position outlies the range of their calculus ; it eludes the grasp of their analysis.

Before proceeding further we shall lay down one or two objections to the existence of a future state.

It is argued by the Materialistic School, a school numbering many minds of the first order, and famous for its sincerity and uprightness, that life and intelligence are only the results of a particular organisation of matter ; or, in other words, that matter itself is quite competent to produce, and does produce, life ; and, as the major proposition, that we have no knowledge of any substance existing in the universe save matter and its manifold, ever-varying phenomena. Consequently, whenever the body of man is dissolved, whenever the organisation is destroyed, consciousness and intelligence both cease.\*

While we have no sympathy with the materialistic arguments, in so far as they deny the immortality of man, we sometimes do feel that spirit may, after all, only be *sublimated* matter—substance refined to an inconceivable degree, thereby becoming spiritual to us ; and although we are unable to see how matter can originate intelligence or be life, we are equally unable to see how spirit can produce intelligence, or be itself life. There may be a higher principle than either, but this only carries the difficulty a step further back.

Matter and spirit can be no more than *relative* terms. To the spiritual eye, the Spirit world must be as tangible, as substantial, as material, as this outward world is to the natural eye. Now, the soul if it exists after death, must

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\* The physiological argument for the continued existence of the soul after death, drawn from the change or renewal of the body in a period of 14 years or thereby, is not well founded. At the most, the fact (admitting its truth) can only prove that the soul can live in *different* bodies, not that it can exist *outside of a body*.

be something—an entity; and if by matter we mean that which exists, that which is something in contradistinction to nothing, entity in opposition to nonentity, then the soul is clearly material, however refined its substance. At the same time, this materiality of the soul cannot in any way be used as an argument against its immortality. The difference lies more in words than anything else. If I believe in the continual existence of the soul, what matters it whether I call that soul *material* or *immaterial*?

It is further argued, that if soul and body in union with each other only make a perfect man—if the one is as necessary as the other to develop conscious intelligence, upon what principle of sound reasoning or analogy can the soul, or the unseen elements that go to make up the soul, be held to exist as a distinct, intelligent personality after separation from the body? If it did, the body would be worse than useless; it would be a blunder of nature, which can make no blunders.

Again, it is argued, that as the visible part of man is seen to return at death to its original elements in the laboratory of Mother Nature, where it goes to the formation of other bodies, both of man and beast, may we not legitimately infer that the unseen part (even granting that there is such a part) follows a similar law in its own kingdom? The storehouse of *visible* matter is as infinite as the storehouse of *invisible* matter can possibly be. And if the Life or Law permeating the universe finds it necessary, with an infinity of matter, to employ the body in the development of new forms, does He not also, although the soul-universe be infinite, require the spirit, the unseen part of man, to develop new intelligences?

Hence the materialistic school hold that there is no *conscious* life apart from the body.\*

These arguments are doubtless of considerable weight when reviewed from the outermost natural or physical standpoint; they occur to many thoughtful minds seeking

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\* To those who believe that the body forms no part of the man properly understood—it being nothing more than the shell in which he is encased—the objections just indicated can be of little or no moment.

to grapple with the difficulties of the question; and could they be demonstrated—could it be shown that there are no spiritual substances, or substances akin to spiritual in the universe—that there is no life outside the body, and that at death the soul is swallowed up in the womb of Mother Nature as a drop is lost in the mighty ocean, then all belief in the truth of a future state would at once be destroyed, and the question settled for ever. But as they cannot be proved, as they merely rest upon the grounds of probability—strong probability, we admit, in the absence of contrary evidence—we are free to retain our theory, and turn elsewhere in search of proof.

Further, if the believer in a future life be unable to establish his proposition, neither can the unbeliever establish his. The two sides are therefore equally balanced, so far as rigid demonstration is concerned. While both cannot be true, one of them must; and the intuitional argument, whatever its value, is all in favour of a future life.

Having come this length, a sense of justice to the lower creatures obliges us to remark that if *man* has a continued existence after death, so may *they* have. Let none of my readers startle at the doctrine, for it is neither new nor altogether fanciful.

If the animals around us have no future, it will be difficult, nay impossible, on *a priori* grounds, to establish man's after-existence. The natural arguments that go to prove this, likewise go to prove that. That creation is linked to man, or rather man is linked to it, by many bonds of similarity.\* All its various members, however low in the scale, exhibit a principle of life, a principle of intelligence, akin in nature—we don't say in degree, for natural facts would disprove us—to that exhibited by man. Have they not both sprung from the same inexhaustible and incomprehensible source of all life? Are they not both parts of the same great whole?

It will not do to deny intelligence, to deny a soul—

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\* It is almost superfluous to say that we are believers in the Darwinian hypothesis—the development, or “continuity” theory of species.

mortal or immortal, who can tell?—to the lower creation. Such a denial, besides bringing disorder into the beautiful order of nature, has been the cause of endless disputes, and has formed the materialist's most powerful argument against future existence. Animals possess the faculty of memory, and display, not unfrequently, considerable powers of reflection. Those highest in the scale can reason from effect to cause, and *vice versa*, as well as man. The difference lies in *degree*, not in *kind*. If necessary, we could produce many instances of such reasoning. They show affection and gratitude, in many cases more sincere, not to say lasting, than man's—which last is too often the offshoot of mere selfishness. To say that all this is the result of *instinct*, and that man's actions and thoughts only are the result of *reason*, is simply to play upon words. Men's actions and ideas are just as instinctive to his nature as those of any other animal. All those actions and thoughts are attributable to causes inherent in his constitution, which causes are as natural as the revolution of the earth round the sun, and as far beyond his control as the rising of the tide. He does not even know, and how can he control them.\* Why, then, should we ruthlessly consign the myriad members and species of the lower creation to eternal destruction after death any more than man? Are they not as worthy of life as we are? This world is a province of God's boundless empire as much as any other, visible or invisible, and as we find birds and beasts of every rank, shape, and colour occupying the present sphere, where, we ask, is the antecedent impossibility or improbability of finding them all beyond the mystic stream? We can adduce none.

Once more, much of the pleasure of the present life is derived from our observation of that creation. Who does not love to hear the sweet carolling of the birds from amongst the bushes of some picturesque glen or lovely dell richly clad in nature's beauty? Who does not love to watch the innocent playful gambols of the young lambs on the lea in early summer? Who has not admired the con-

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\* This may be Necessitarianism, it may be even Fatalism; but what of that, if it is truth!

finding, unselfish nature of the dog, or the patient disposition of the horse? Shall we say, then, that man's existence, either here or hereafter, would be better and happier without such companions? No. Human love, like God's, must become commensurate with all creation; it must go out to all that inhabits either land, or sea, or air.

Moreover, where is the necessity to limit their lives to this "wee short span?" Where the proof that the principle of life within them dissolves when the destroying angel descends upon their outward frames? Besides, if it be urged—as urged it is—that man must, if justice rules the universe, have a future to recompense the sufferings and sorrows—we will not add the so-called sins and crimes—of his life on earth; then, upon the same principle, must a continued existence after death be granted to the lower creation, to make up for the cruelties inflicted upon them by man, and by themselves upon each other. We, therefore, conclude, that the individual of free, unbiassed mind, who faithfully interrogates nature—the only certain and infallible revelation of God—who watches her every movement and daily seeks to penetrate her secrets, is forced to the conviction, reasoning from an *a priori* standpoint, that man's immortality or future existence carries along with it, as a fit corollary, the existence in other spheres of the lower animal kingdom.

Such a belief as the one now indicated, while clearing up many of life's mysteries (for life is a mystery unsolved as yet by human intellect), places man's future existence upon a more rational, because a more tenable basis; and strips the confirmed materialist of his strongest arguments against the theory of a future state.\*

How soul-satisfying, how congenial to our nature is this theory of a future life, in realms Elysian, beyond the sky! How ecstatic the prospect of yet mingling with the noble and pure, the good and great, of every age and nation! How rapturous the thought of yet coming in contact with

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\* In considering this subject, we, it will be seen, have kept out of view the effect of the probability, some say the fact, that *man's* is the only *immortally-individualised soul* in nature—those of all other animals being dissolved at death.

the bright and wise intelligences of worlds without number! The inner man, even now, would rise upon the wings of faith and hope to pierce the veil that hides them from our view. Who, meantime, would not plod through the mists and mires of existence without murmuring were they assured that such a high consummation awaited them at last! Oh that it were true! We long, we pray that it may be so. All the higher aspirations and intuitions of our being pant for immortality as the thirsty soil cries for rain. Shall their demands be met? Surely they are not dreams, visions destined to be dashed to pieces by the rough hand of nature and experience in that dread hour when the fingers that now write shall become inanimate as the dust on which men tread.

Although we have come thus far we have been unable to establish the certainty of a future life either for man or beast. We have seen that natural science, as at present interpreted, is confessedly incompetent to deal with the question. We have seen that the universality of man's belief in immortality, when standing alone, is not sufficiently cogent to convince the mind of the reality of future existence. We have seen that the arguments drawn from the materialistic and spiritualistic standpoints are about equally balanced. Must we now give up the investigation in despair? Must we fold our hands, and shut our eyes, and go down to the grave as a man enters a dark unknown cave? Is there no way of escape from this sea of doubt and gloom? Has no ray of light ever been shed across its waves? Has the Law, or Mind, that brought us here made no provision for our enlightenment? Has he no wish, because he sees no reason or necessity, that we should be enlightened and set at rest? Must we float down the stream, neither knowing whence we came nor whither we are going? Oh! is this our state? Is there no hand or power on high to come to the rescue? Must we chafe for ever against the walls of our dark and doleful prison-house, with none to help and none to cheer?

Now, if there be a future state, and if there be a God who purposes to make man acquainted with that state while in the body, we submit that the means most likely to be



employed by Him, with the view of making it known, would be *the return of the so-called dead*—the departed loved ones; the return of men who once inhabited the visible planes of being to men who still inhabit these planes. Such a method would prove at once the most efficient and convincing, while it also would be the simplest and most natural.\* Nature works by the simplest means. The cause, if always adequate to, is never greater than the effect. The Life or Law governing, mayhap constituting the universe, while at all times exhaustless in resources, knows no useless waste of energy, no vain display of power. The farther our investigations extend into the boundless kingdom of nature, the nice, the rigid adaptation of means to ends becomes the more apparent. As for any revelation of Deity in the sense claimed by modern theologians the means is far too great for the end. Nature supplies no analogy—gives no countenance to the scheme. Moreover, we see no necessity for the revelation; and we doubt man's ability to distinguish, comprehend, or promulgate it, had it been made—were such possible; while, we are certain, that he could not have proved its advent to those minds who had not personally witnessed that advent. The idea that a few unlettered Hebrews, living in the barbarous ages of the world's history, with conceptions of a God not much higher than a tutelary divinity—the idea that these men were the special and only messengers of that revelation—that they were the favourites of Him who has no favourites, is both monstrous and absurd, scarcely meriting a moment's entertainment in the thoughtful mind, were it not for the strong, unaccountable hold such an idea or belief has obtained in the minds of a large portion of the race.

While far from asserting that a revelation of that nature is absolutely impossible, we are of opinion that in the present limitation and impotency of the human faculties, *it could not be brought down to the level of human comprehension*, and consequently would not be made by a wise Deity. Nor will it meet this proposition to say that such a statement

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\* Were man further progressed in the Divine Life, intuition alone, as said before, might be sufficient; but, meantime, her gentle voice is choked by the powers and passions of his grosser nature.

limits the *Creator*. It only limits the *creature*. The universe undoubtedly is a full, clear, and perfect manifestation of the Infinite Being; but who will say that the Creator is limited, because man is undoubtedly unable to understand the workings or the nature of that universe, and because the Creator has so constituted man that he cannot understand it. Moreover, why make a second revelation until the first is unfolded? The human faculties cannot be brought in direct contact with the Infinite Mind or Spirit that inhabits the universe as a man's soul does his body. The Infinite and the Finite can never meet. The most exalted intellect can make no approachment to the Divine Intelligence. Human apprehension can never determine the characteristics of an Infinite Being; neither can human testimony ever establish his presence *in propria persona*, because the human mind could not discern what constituted a *special, personal* manifestation from that which constitutes the *general* manifestation of his nature and character as exhibited in creation, more particularly in man himself, even were such a special, personal manifestation or revelation of Deity made. If a man were to announce that he had been in communication with the Divine Being, and specially commissioned by that Being to declare His will, a sound, enlightened reason, thoroughly alive to the difficulties of the case, would dispute the announcement, because on the face of it it appears impossible that an Infinite and a Finite nature can ever meet; and, secondly, the man's faculties were utterly incompetent positively to determine whether the Being whom he alleged had spoken to him was really God, that awful and incomprehensible Existence, whom no man hath seen or can see, or simply a *superhuman* being which he, in his ignorance, mistook for the Deity himself. But, in fact, this idea of a man ever being in personal communication with the Divine Being took its rise in that undeveloped state of the human mind, which conceives the Deity to be an existence very little removed from the confines of human intelligence itself. The mind's *concept* of a God is necessarily a transcript and criterion of its own development. In other words, a man's *God* is a picture of *himself*. You cannot

convey exalted conceptions of Deity to a narrow, unintellectual mind any more than you can crush a three-inch down a two-inch bore pipe (using a homely illustration). Of that we are confident.

Granting that any such special revelation had been made, we feel convinced that the *modus operandi* of its introduction into the world would have been far different, it would have been far more universal and demonstrative, than that alleged to have been employed in the introduction of the Christian, or more properly Jewish, revelation. We incline to think that it would have been co-extensive with mankind, *self-evidencing*, and self-interpreting—or at least that its interpreters would themselves have been infallible—which the Romish hierarchy consistently maintain they are.

The evidence brought forward by Christian apologists to establish the divine origin and authority of the Jewish revelation is wholly inadequate. We do not base that statement upon any inconsistencies or absurdities that may be found in the system itself—although these certainly are sufficient grounds to show the fallibility of the system or revelation, and the consequent impossibility of its messengers being infallibly inspired. The divine origin and authority of the Bible are said to rest upon alleged miracles and prophecies. We mean to assert that the performance of miracles (falsely so called), and the foretelling of future events, in language so dark and symbolical that it cannot be understood until the events themselves transpire—thereby virtually annulling their title to true prophecy—are no proofs whatever that a man has been in direct communication with the Divine Spirit or Being that fills infinitude, and been by that Being commissioned or inspired to declare infallible truths. We put it to the intelligent, untrammelled thinker,—is it not far more rational and far safer to hold that these acts are performed by superior spiritual beings acting through the organism of the individual, than to rush to the wild hypothesis that they are indisputable proofs of a man, a mortal of flesh and blood, having spoken to the “King, Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible, who dwelleth in light unapproachable, and full of glory”? We know not the capabilities, far less the

possibilities, of finite power and wisdom; and of two difficulties a true philosophy invariably chooses the least. Besides, the prophets and apostles, the alleged messengers of that revelation, were not perfect in their lives. Now, if God permitted them to *commit* error, the legitimate inference is, he allowed them to *write* error. The contrary position is a mere assumption. In dealing with all such questions, we must never forget that we are dealing only with *men* and with *human testimony*. The continual cry of the church, that the Bible is the word of God, sure and indisputable, is little better than a device to bind weak minds, or a bait to catch unwary ones. We rejoice that the thinking portion of mankind are now beginning to understand it as such. Men are fast learning that it is as bad, if not worse, to link God's name with a book he has *not* written as it is to deny a book he *has* written.

The long black era of mental imbecility and babyhood on religious subjects is, moreover, we feel sure, fast drawing to a close. The minds of many, of more than we are aware, have already outgrown it. The chains of mental slavery and terror that have so long crushed the divinity in man, will not bind much longer. All the higher powers and forces in the universe are pledged to the cause of progress. Victory is sure, and it may not be far off. The Reformer can afford to wait. The resistless sweep and mammoth tread of the eternal ages are on his side.

To return. If the departed exist, and possess the same feelings and desires as when on earth, which they must do if they preserve identity; then, from what we know of human nature, they must be anxious, and, if they are able, consequently willing (oh! how willing) to return to those left behind, weeping and downcast at their loss. How they must speed upon the journey to tell the dwellers in the vale below of the truth of future existence, happy and glorious!

The question of our departed friends' ability to return to earth, and communicate with us, can only be determined by the *fact* of their return; it can only be ascertained when (so to speak) they make themselves known to our senses. For it is manifest that we cannot rationally hold any pre-

conceived notions, either *pro* or *con*, upon the point. We stand on neutral ground, ready to go to either side according as facts and evidence present themselves to direct us. The Baconian spirit must be ours. The inductive philosophy must be our guide and interpreter. No other will lead us to truth. We have seen that human reason and human science, however comprehensive and profound, when confined to the visible world for their data, are powerless to establish the theory of a future life. The presence and the testimony of men who have doffed "the mortal coil," and entered upon another life in supra-mundane spheres, who have walked up and down the spirit-land, is thus absolutely essential to the demonstration of that theory. None other will carry conviction to the mind. Their evidence alone can dispel the darkness that surrounds the grave.

The necessity for spiritual manifestations is, therefore, both imperative and indispensable, if ever we are to attain a certain knowledge of our destiny. If men, after death, neither do nor can return to earth, we conclude—quite legitimately remember—that we are entirely ignorant of a future state. Of course, there may be, but while in the body we know nothing of it beyond the region of conjecture and probability. But we can go further. We can conclude, and defy the world to disprove our conclusion, that there is no such state, and that man, noble animal as he is, is at death sucked into the remorseless, all-devouring whirlpool of an ocean that is at once shoreless and bottomless, and of whose origin, design, or destiny we can form no conception satisfactory even to ourselves. Nature, in its outer workings, unquestionably favours such a conclusion.\*

At the same time, and for the same reason, we are at liberty to take the opposite conclusion; and this, from its being the bright side of the picture, and more in accordance with the desires of human nature, is what the vast majority of the race do, and would do, though all evidence of future existence were swept from off the globe to-morrow. Only a few strong minds of the cold, intellectual cast, with

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\* The conclusion, more properly inference, just stated, may not be strictly logical, as man cannot be positive of that which he cannot prove. We, however, have allowed it to remain for the sake of effect.

low emotional developments, are found accepting and advocating the first theory. But we must never forget that we are in search of truth *for its own sake*. Both theories cannot be right. Who shall make known the true one? and, regardless of results to feelings, hopes, or interests, we are ready to accept and advocate it. No other position, we submit, is thoroughly Baconian. Facts, and facts alone, can solve the problem. All opinions and prejudices must be laid aside in the investigation.

We think we have now sufficiently paved the way for the introduction of the following inquiry:—Have disembodied men (mark, we don't say spirits) ever come back to earth after death? Have the departed ever descended on wings of love to acquaint their fellow-brethren on the terrestrial planes of being that eternal bliss is a fact—a fact too big for expression? The affirmative solution of that inquiry is our only hope. Will it, too, fail us? In other words, can the question be so answered?

We repeat that we are free to enter upon the inquiry, and free to believe in the return of men after death—provided that return is sufficiently substantiated—from the very circumstance that if we cannot demonstrate the possibility of such an event, neither can we prove its impossibility.

For the further elucidation of man's ability or non-ability to return to earth, let us glance at the different schools of opinion in regard to the general question on all such and kindred occurrences, falsely designated supernatural and miraculous—a designation which, we are persuaded, has caused all the confusion, all the endless, as well as fruitless, disputes on this perplexing subject—meanwhile excluding the school represented by the believers in the phenomena and philosophy of Modern Spiritualism, to which we are happy to have the honour to belong; and which of course we claim to be the only consistent school, as it is the only rational interpreter of the much-vexed problem now under consideration.

These schools may be said to be three in number. 1st. That of Hume, one of the greatest philosophers of the last century. 2nd. That of Renan, the learned author of the able and well-known work, "The Life of Jesus," who

occupies an almost *unique* position in regard to miracles among the thinkers of modern Europe. 3rd. That represented by the believers in Modern Christianity (so called) with its multifarious sects—Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Independents, etc.—and by the believers of every other religious system under heaven, who each and all fight for their own particular doctrines, which they believe—sincerely we hope—to be God-given. With reference to the first school, Hume not only denied the *probability* but also the *possibility* of miracles (we employ the old phraseology that we may be the better understood). He did this on the ground that such events were an infringement of nature's laws, and contrary to experience. Now, undoubtedly, if it could be shown that these occurrences implied a suspension, or a breaking of or even a deviation from the laws of nature, the position of Hume would be impregnable; for the eternal and immutable laws that govern the universe can never be broken or suspended; nor is there ever a necessity for so doing. So long as the *miraculous* idea was attached to such occurrences, Hume's argument was, therefore, unanswerable. The miraculous idea springs from a misconception of their nature, and must soon be given up—in fact the sooner the better for its defenders;—for here lies the weakness and error of their whole case. The advanced minds of the Spiritual Philosophy simply regard them as the development or manifestation of hitherto, and in some cases still, unknown laws, which are quite as natural in their own kingdom as the physical laws which obtain in the visible world. We know not all the laws that act in the universe; yea, we know only a few of their infinite number, and that only when they (so to speak) discover themselves as *effects*; for of primal causes we are absolutely ignorant. Therefore, until it can be demonstrated that the whole range of natural law, existing and operating through a boundless universe, has been explored, we may consistently hold that these occurrences, if they occur—which is a different question, and has to be decided on different grounds—are nothing more than the results of the inbringing of a law, or laws, old as eternity, and as

natural as the return of day and night. No event, no action, can be unnatural. All are true to the causes that produce them; and if there be a God of infinite power, wisdom, and benevolence, ruling over all—which our inmost soul declares there is, although we cannot prove it—these causes themselves must be right, and working out ineffably grand results, however dark and perplexing their character may appear to us. If the fountain be pure, so must the stream. This we take to be an axiom.

To continue. The argument from experience may, we think, be sufficiently met by saying that although universal experience does not support the taking place of such occurrences, neither does it disprove their taking place, or (to put it in the mildest form) the possibility of their taking place. Give me an event, sufficiently attested by credible witnesses, and on the recognised principles of human evidence and belief, I am free, not to say bound, to give it my belief. At the same time, it is clear that the question of the sufficiency of that evidence will have to be decided before I can believe. This point will be taken up as we advance. For, until I can prove that I have experienced all the effects that can or may be produced by all the laws obtaining in this universe, I cannot decide what other men may have experienced or seen. The very fact that any event occurs, while it shows that the event is not contrary to the laws of nature, also shows that it was not contrary to the experience of those who witnessed it. The same conditions have only to be fulfilled again, when the same result will necessarily be evolved; and that result, by continued repetition, may ultimately become a matter of experience as much as any daily event. The word "impossibility" can scarcely be admitted into the Baconian creed. Evidence is the *desideratum*. But that evidence must be weighed and sifted. It must be taken in connection with opposite evidence and rational probabilities, if there be any. Of two contradictory propositions, or statements, or even facts, which may be, from their nature or otherwise, incapable of satisfactory proof, that supported by the greatest amount of evidence or probability is invariably accepted.



Were this rule observed, how different would be our religious state to-day!

Are miracles, including under that term the return of men *out* of the body to men *in* the body, capable of proof? Hume, of course, on the grounds previously stated, denied that they were. Not on these grounds would we ask the question—Are men competent to distinguish, and, consequently, testify to, the presence of disembodied existences? In other words, can these, if they exist, make themselves known to us; can they bring themselves down to the level of our apprehension, either in their own persons or through the medium of others still in the body? Without entering at any length upon this point at present, we may remark, that if the so-called dead exist, we can on *a priori* grounds, see no reason why they should not be able to manifest themselves in such a manner that we might comprehend them. If they can, then the only condition necessary to a belief in the return of the departed is simply that each alleged return be testified by a sufficient number of credible, discriminative witnesses.

These remarks naturally conduct us to a short review of the opinions of the second school of thought—that which boasts the learned and eloquent Renan for its leader.

Renan neither disputes the possibility nor probability of such occurrences, but argues that they never have been proven. The necessary conditions to carry conviction to intelligent minds have, he asserts, never been fulfilled. No scientific man ever witnessed a miracle, or certified to its truth. The evidence, such as it is, is that of ignorant, enthusiastic minds led away by religious bigotry and fanaticism. That evidence, when subjected to the test of a rigid, philosophic scrutiny, has, he maintains, invariably broken down.

This position, while novel, is, we think, much stronger than that of Hume. The argument is more subtle. It launches us into the wide field of human testimony, its nature, capabilities, conditions, and value. It strikes at the motives which regulate the human heart and human society. We almost feel our inability to cope with it, and were we not Spiritualists we most certainly would become disciples of Renan.

We think there is, nevertheless, a fallacy in his argument. We grant that stronger evidence will be required to establish a rare event than one that frequently happens. Who shall settle the *quantum* and *quality* of such evidence! It will be admitted that the senses of an ignorant man are equally to be relied upon with those of a man of science, more especially when the object or effect that strikes upon both is, from its nature, alike unknown to either. Miracles are generally an appeal to the senses, and from their nature they cannot be defined till they occur. We cannot *pre-tell* what they should, and what they should not be. The philosopher and the savage are equal here. In all previously unknown things appealing merely to the senses, we are, therefore, as ready to accept the testimony of unlearned as learned men, on the understanding that both are equally honest. Hence, scientific attainments, though, mayhap, an advantage, are not absolutely essential to prove a supernatural (so-called) event.

We consequently conclude that there can be no logical reason to doubt the testimony of a *sufficient* number of *credible* witnesses, learned or unlearned, who themselves witnessed and experienced the return of a departed spirit. Are such witnesses to be found? Is their number sufficient? If so, then our question is settled, and man's future existence proved by sensible evidence. How transporting the prospect! The soul exults in it. Gold and diamonds, crowns and kingdoms, are nothing in comparison. That return and that existence are manifestly in their nature, not above our comprehension. We may, therefore, safely accept human testimony in regard to them. Were they beyond our comprehension, we immediately would say that other than *human* testimony would be requisite to establish their truth.

We now come to the third school of opinion on miracles—that represented by the believers of Modern Christianity, or rather Ancient Judaism (for we deny their claim to Christianity, properly so called), and by the believers of all other religious systems. Each of these systems believes in miracles, but denies the reality of any beyond its own pale. In respect to the Christians, the Roman Catholics

believe both in ancient and modern miracles. They assert, and that consistently, that if miracles were necessary to the establishment of the Church in the world, they are also necessary to the propagation of its principles, and the maintenance of its authority as a Divine revelation. The true Mother Church alone has miracles vouchsafed to her by Almighty God. All events claiming to be such, if out of the bosom of the Mother, are of Satanic origin. The Protestants, on the other hand, subscribe only to *past* miracles, denying that any can or do take place *now*. This position is quite untenable. It cuts away the very foundations of their own belief in miracles. It removes the very proof which would prove their case. For if miracles do not take place now, the legitimate inference—more especially when we consider the weakness of the evidence in favour of any such past occurrences—is, they never did take place. If Columbus had declared that none would ever discover the New World after himself, would any have believed his statement of its discovery? Certainly not. They would have set him down either as a rogue or a fool; and quite right too. What one man can accomplish, another man may. In the same way, if men cannot return to earth now, how are we to believe in their return 2000 or 3000 years ago? Nay, more; if any man or number of men should come forward and announce in big-mouthed language that they have been in communication with the Spirit-World, not to say the Divine Spirit or Being that fills immensity; and were they in the same breath to tell us that they alone had the power, and that it would die with them; how many rational men would give the least heed to their assertions? Not one. For the conditions they laid down were such that their statements could never be ascertained either to be true or false; and until we have the means to prove a statement true, we are always warranted in setting it down, if not as false, as at least undeserving of credence. The *perpetual*, the *present* existence of miracles is therefore a *sine qua non* to a belief in past miracles. A belief in the *present* return of men to earth is the sole rational foundation on which to rest our belief in their *past* return. Based as they both are upon human

testimony, both stand or fall together. If human testimony can establish the one, it manifestly can establish the other.

The position taken up by modern churches is essentially materialistic, and therefore atheistic. The arguments urged by them to refute Modern Spiritualism are most assuredly the arguments advanced by the infidels (we don't use the term reproachfully—far from it) of last century to destroy a belief in the Bible, and its miracles or spiritualism. (We, of course, believe in the Bible, but in a much different and more rational sense than its so-called believers.) The age is practically materialistic. The very evidences which alone can prove an existence out of the body, and render probable past spiritual manifestations, are by the men of the present day persistently ignored and maligned. Any man who avows that "he has seen a spirit," is by them set down as credulous and silly beyond expression. To such a pass have men been brought by the teachings of divines and professors calling themselves Christian! How strange that professed believers in a future state should be forced to take up the position of Humeists! What a spectacle! How pitiable! Oh! for the return of rationality and life to Modern Orthodoxy and its adherents.

To return to our last starting point. Let us ask—Have spiritual manifestations been alleged to occur? Has a requisite number of honest witnesses been found to attest their truth?

Looking back upon the page of history, we find that every nation and every age have their records of visits from the "Silent Land," of messages purporting to come "from that bourne whence," according to orthodox belief, "no traveller returns." Weird and grotesque, wrapt up in fable and fancy, they may be; but still they are there, and have to be accounted for. The belief in invisible beings, "who walk the earth unseen," and are sometimes permitted to hold converse with men on earth, is deep-rooted in the human breast. The teachings of materialistic theology cannot smother it. Nature will and does assert her power in spite of all the creeds in the world. From this belief have sprung the many fairy tales and endless ghost stories

which delighted, and not unfrequently frightened us in infancy and early youth.

But further. Every religion, every system of worship—

“From utmost Ind’ to the ultimate pole,”

not only is based upon the reality of a spirit-world, but postulates the ability of departed spirits to return to earth and communicate with men. These religions themselves were chiefly given through the ministrations of departed spirits, or angels, as they have been called. In short, the spiritual element, in forms as various as the occasions are numerous, runs through the vein of all history, more particularly ancient history.

The modern historian cannot altogether ignore this element; and although, doubtless, the accounts of such occurrences are much coloured and exaggerated; although age, like distance, only “lends enchantment to the view;” although it does not strengthen evidence, but, on the contrary, weakens it—we submit that he would be guilty of a misapprehension as well as a transgression of the laws of human evidence, and the value of human testimony, were he at once, and without any investigation, to set down the whole as false, and unworthy of the least credit or attention. At the same time, and for the reasons previously stated, we would not be inclined to give credence to the “miraculous,” were no events of a similar nature taking place, or alleged to be taking place, at the present time.

The question now presents itself—Are spiritual manifestations taking place in our midst even now? Are men returning to earth even now? And, Is the testimony in favour thereof sufficient to carry conviction to intelligent, unbiassed minds, who only want to find truth and have no pet theories to uphold?

We are sure it will be admitted by all who have paid any attention to the subject that manifestations of no ordinary character are occurring in England and America and over the continent of Europe at this present moment. These manifestations are diversified in their character. They are singular and unaccountable, save, we hold, on one hypothesis. We may enumerate a few of the more

striking. Large tables are moved, and pieces of furniture made to fly through the room without coming in contact with any visible or known power. Musical instruments are played exquisitely by unseen hands. Answers by raps on the table, or *viva-voce* through the person said to be the medium, are given to questions which could not possibly have been previously known to the medium. Husbands have had questions answered which only their deceased wives could possibly reply to. Fathers have received messages from sons, and sons from fathers—messages that have inspired them with hope, and filled their hearts with joy. Many have been greeted with happy and unexpected welcomes from friends and acquaintances whom they had long ago forgotten, and whose existence could not, upon any theory, be known to the medium through whom the messages came. In some cases, solid bodies are made to pass through walls, and even men, living men, are made to float in the air, and are carried out of the room. These are only a few of what we may call the lower phases of the movement.

Coming to the higher. Many mediums in America are able to heal the sick, to cure the maimed and deformed, to give eyesight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, by simply touching or manipulating their bodies. Unlearned men and women are enabled to speak in languages of which they are completely ignorant; they are enabled to pour forth torrents of burning eloquence and profound philosophy on the most scientific and metaphysical subjects. Others are made to write involuntarily upon topics far beyond their natural comprehension or their acquirements; while others can execute beautiful paintings, in both oil and water colours, without previous study of the art. All these, when asked, assert positively that they are not the only agents in the work, but that there is a higher power and intelligence within them directing and originating the whole. And when these intelligences are appealed to, they invariably affirm that they are what they purport to be—although this, of itself, is mayhap no proper element of proof. Still more wonderful. Many of these intelligences, departed men and women as they

claim to be, can materialise themselves in such a manner that they can be seen with the bodily eye, and heard speaking and singing—singing celestial songs so sweetly that the soul is ravished with delight while listening to their enchanting strains. Brilliant lights are displayed, and unearthly hands are felt and grasped. Flowers that never bloomed on earth are dropped upon the floor and on the persons composing the circle. Such is only a brief abstract of what takes place.

Now, if these statements and assertions were put forth merely by a few sanguine, unknown, and ignorant minds carried away by religious enthusiasm; if they were merely the audacious pretensions of a number of mountebanks, showmen, or professional jugglers, they certainly would not be worthy of credence by intelligent men, without, at least, personal observation and experience of their reality, nor would we be called upon to give much attention to their claims.

The case, however, is far otherwise. Thousands of men of undoubted character, and often high position, men of great learning and well-known fame, both in this country and America, are found ready and willing to attest in the most solemn manner to the reality of these phenomena, extraordinary though they be. Such testimony cannot be ignored—it cannot be gainsayed. If men and women have a real existence, if the five senses are not eternally deceptive, if human testimony can prove anything, most assuredly these manifestations have been proved to be *facts*—facts as undeniable as the shining of the sun, the rising of the moon, or the twinkling of the eternal stars, “the forget-me-nots of the angels,” as Longfellow pictures them in that chaste, captivating language he knows so well how to employ, and of which he is so much a master.

The question now arises—What are the causes of these wonderful phenomena? In proposing this question we have no desire—nor do we consider it necessary—to enter into any lengthened or elaborate examination of the various theories and hypotheses, other than the Spiritual, that have been raised to account for their occurrence.

We have carefully studied them all—Electricity, Odic Force, Mesmerism, Clairvoyance, Brain or Mind Reading, Hallucination, Deception; and we have come to the conclusion that none but the Spiritual theory can meet the wants of the case. We don't mean to affirm that even it is entirely free of difficulties. Men cannot demonstrate their own existence. A philosophical *nescience* is the highest mental condition to which the human mind can attain in its present state. How, then, can they absolutely demonstrate that the departed spirits who originate these manifestations are the men who once lived on earth? How can they positively determine that they are even spirits? Men must be guided and swayed by the greatest probabilities and the strongest reasonable proofs. Intelligence—not unfrequently that of a high order—is displayed in the Spiritual phenomena. We reject the theories of electricity, magnetism, &c., because physical forces cannot possibly be possessed of intelligence. Hallucination we discard without a fear, because it virtually reduces all existence to a nonentity or delusion. Deception may be practised in some cases by professional mediums; but that man surely were a paragon of credulity (if we may so express it)—he surely were lost to all justice and common sense, were he to believe and maintain that thousands of intelligent men and women, unimpeachable in veracity on other matters, were by some process of mental legerdemain suddenly transformed into cheats and liars whenever they bore witness to the truth of Modern Spiritualism, without any conceivable motives whatever, nay, when by so doing they may and do become the subjects of ridicule and reproach.

We are Spiritualists on two grounds :—1st, The cogency of its testimony; and 2nd, The rationality and sublimity, the breadth and depth, of its philosophy. The latter, to us, was far more convincing as a proof of its origin than the former. The phenomena of Spiritualism are nothing more than the outposts of the citadel; they are but the vestibule of an unmeasured and immeasurable temple.\*

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\* That philosophy, as it unfolds itself to my mind, may yet form the subject of a second and larger pamphlet.



In giving our adhesion to the cause and truth of Modern Spiritualism, we are only the humble followers of a host of men distinguished in the walks of Science and Literature. Not a few of the brightest intellects in England and America, and on the continent of Europe, after many years of careful investigation, have publicly testified to its truth, and written in its defence. A man certainly is neither a fanatic nor a lunatic—he is neither unwise nor unlearned, when he joins the ranks of the noble army that marches on to victory.

We may enumerate a few of the more prominent names. In America, the seat of the movement, there are or were the Hon. Judge Edmonds of New York, the Hon. Judge Carter of Cincinnati, the late Professor Hare of Philadelphia, Professor Brittan of Boston, who has written largely on the subject; the late Governor Tallmadge of Wisconsin, Rev. Dr Fergusson of Tennessee, a friend of the present President; and last, though not least, the late President Lincoln, the father of his country, was almost, if not altogether, a Spiritualist. In England, we have, or had, the late Archbishop of Dublin—the learned Dr Whately;\* Professor De Morgan, of the London University, confessedly one of the greatest of living mathematicians, and Mrs De Morgan; the redoubtable William and Mary Howitt, who stand high in the literary world, and are almost household English names; Mr and Mrs S. C. Hall, both well-known in the world of letters; Doctors Elliotson and Ashburner, famous as physicians and men of medical science; while the late William Makepeace Thackeray, editor of the “Cornhill Magazine,” and a distinguished *litterateur*, is believed to have been a Spiritualist. Robert Chambers, one of the heads of the large publishing house, “W. & R. Chambers,” and himself an able and a learned writer, is also believed to be a Spiritualist. Baron Reichenbach of Germany, famous for his researches in Animal Magnetism, and Allan Kardec of Paris, the leader of a distinct school of Spiritualists, are, mayhap, the more prominent Continental names. The Court of the Tuileries, and the Court of all the

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\* We are not positive of this name.

Russias, are, it is well known, Spiritualistic in their tendencies. And we hope we may be pardoned for alluding to the rumour—ill or well-founded we know not—that the amiable royal lady who presides at the British Court, and reigns over these realms—a woman, we are convinced, of the finest sensibilities—is inclined to look favourably upon the Spiritual movement. Need we wonder at this when we think of her intense, deathless love for the lost Albert!

Many of the middle, and not a few of the upper, classes in England, are believers in the movement; while in America, its adherents may be numbered by millions of every grade in the social scale, and every order of intelligence.

With such a formidable array of testimony in favour of the *present* return of departed spirits, and their ability to communicate with mortals, we may with all safety, and in accordance with every principle of sound reason, accept the theory of man's future existence as a *demonstrated fact*, and hang thereon our belief in this immortality, which we think may also be proved from a consideration of the nature of the soul; but on this we do not now intend to enter, save to remark that we hold it to be an epitome of eternal principles, being itself, therefore, eternal or at least immortal.

Immortality! Who shall tell, far less comprehend, the infinitely great and glorious truths locked up in the word? Neither men nor angels. Can it be that even now we are the heirs, nay more, the recipients of a life that shall never die? Does the vigour of an eternal youth already sit enthroned in the soul? Yes; man is immortal. Is any knowledge, either in heaven or on earth; is any discovery in Science or Art, however profound and useful; are any distinctions—the chaplets of poets, the laurels of warriorhood, the honours of statesmen, the diadems of kings all combined—comparable to this? Shall we spurn from our notice that which demonstrates it? Ah! no. It is dear to our heart.

Man immortal! Proclaim it, O heavens! Shout it forth, O earth! Write it in characters of supernal light,

large as the King of Day, across the blue vault of night! Sing it out, ye choirs of heaven's minstrelsy, until all the listening stars that crowd the highway of infinitude take up the strain, and its reverberations are heard from planet to sun, from sun to system, and from system to universe! Talk no more of annihilation. The highest intuitions of man rebel at the thought. What! This soul that even now "would scale the battlements of heaven and reach the Throne of the Eternal"—that soars in fancy through the aro-mal, rose-besprinkled expanse of a boundless universe, and plucks in Miltonic flights flowers of amaranth and asphodel in the paradisaical bowers of the "Summer Land," to sink into nothing? What! An eternal oblivion to take possession of this busy, almost omnipotent, brain, and endless ages roll, while I sleep a sleep that (literally, not figuratively) knows no waking? We reel and stagger at the thought. Away with it! The whole being shakes to its centre, and recoils at the idea far more than if a deadly serpent had crossed its path. Whence those feelings of intense horror and sinless hate at the doctrine? They are the innate, divine principles and feelings of man's nature giving it the lie. Talk no more of eternal damnation for God's dear children. He never could, he never did, make men to damn them. Never, no never. He has a far more glorious end in view. What! The God of all love and mercy take pleasure in the endless weepings and wailings of children whom his own hands had made? What! God glorified (as if his glory and his laws were dearer to him than his offspring) in the eternal burnings and excruciating agonies of men who now walk this beauteous, green earth, and look out upon those fair, garnished heavens? What! The Love Principle bring helpless creatures into existence that he might show his sovereignty in condemning them to a living hell of blackness and despair, there to groan and yell for ever? What! The Eternal God of all wisdom and power, who rules this mighty universe and knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end, baffled by poor, puny beings who only came into conscious existence yesterday, and so powerless that he must damn

them in spite of himself, even after (according to orthodox belief) he has sacrificed his Son? Good God! how long shall men remain in spiritual darkness and ignorance—darkness so thick that it may be felt—holding such views of their *Father*? Fling the dogma to the moles and bats. It is blasphemous to the Deity. Its father is the devil, if there be such a personage, which, by-the-by, we deny. We would not believe it for the universe; sooner in fact would we say that space is a blank, and existence a dream. We will not believe it until the black, fiery waves come rolling from the pit to engulf their victims. We will not believe it until the orb of day is blotted out from the heavens, and the million stars that wheel and sparkle in the blue empyrean are reduced to nonentity. Why, of all the monstrous, mythological fables ever hatched in the darkest, bloodiest, and most infamous era of the world's history, the fable of eternal damnation is the chief—a fable that has stung almost to the death myriads of sensitive minds, and frozen the very life-blood of thousands of noble, virtuous souls. Oh! it grieves us to the heart when we hear of fine minded, loving females, being troubled almost to madness with the fear of hell-fire, under the magnetism of a powerful and sincere, though sadly mistaken, preacher. Did they but know that all the pure and lofty intelligences in the universe were on their side; that God himself was on their side, and all his attributes pledged to their eternal safety, by the simple fact *that they are in existence*; could they but see that they can no more be lost than the Creator himself can perish; how their fears would vanish, and how lightly would the ravings of misguided, mayhap disordered, intellects sit upon their minds!

God, our God, giveth not desires of happiness to mock them. He giveth not feelings to stretch them upon the rack. God, our God, delights not in human blood. He is not a grim monster that takes pleasure in driving the Juggernaut wheels of a deathless death over the most cherished hopes and aspirations of his offspring. He is not a bloody demon that awakens feelings of highest thought and purpose, of purest love and justice, in the

breasts of his rational creatures, only that he may extinguish them for ever on the altar of his own unquenchable wrath, for he can have no wrath. Neither is he a black deity that first chains his hapless victims to the stake of immortality, and then plunges them right headlong into the waves of the Tartarean pit, "there to converse with everlasting groans, unrespired, unpitied, and unreprieved." Far less is he a remorseless harpy that eternally eats into the livers of his agonised slaves as they lie bound to the rock of endless punishment, or a Moloch butcher that lets out their heart-blood, glutting over the spectacle.

But I will tell you what he is. He is a Universal Father of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Love. As no earthly parent ever gives up his son for lost, however far he may have strayed; as he can never feel happy or at rest while a single member of his family remains miserable; so, in a sense infinitely higher, God, the Universal Father, can never give up a child of his, can never leave a son to die eternally. He will no more permit a human being to be lost than a father would allow his son to commit suicide. If "in him we live, move, and have our being," how can we be lost? "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things," and all persons. Until he is dethroned from the government of the universe, and a usurper established in his place, these plans, these purposes cannot by any possibility fail of execution. In his own time and way, that is when his laws are understood and obeyed, he will lead all human-kind to the folds of purity and peace, like as a good shepherd leads his flocks by the still waters and the green pastures. Our Father is no respecter of persons; he loves the heathen as much as the Christian; all are alike dear to him; and on the high scale of his eternal purposes he will manifest his love alike to all. He is just; yes, and on that very account we trust him. He has decreed all things; yes, and because of that we *know* all beings shall be everlastingly happy, and all things gloriously perfect. But man is a sinner, and God must punish sin. Viewing as we do these propositions from a philosophical standpoint, we are

necessitated, in the interests of truth, and much as it may grate upon the feelings of the so-called religious, to deny the first proposition, and by logical sequence the last. Man is no more a sinner than the animals that fight and steal and destroy each other around him. If the lower faculties of his nature predominate over the higher, he will gratify them, or rather they will gratify themselves, by virtue of a law as sure in its operation as that which points the needle to the pole, or makes water seek its own level; and in doing so he is no more a sinner than the dog that hunts down the hare, or the tiger that springs upon its prey. Nature governs man; he does not govern nature. On the other hand, if the higher faculties predominate, he will follow their dictates—mayhap becoming a poet, a philosopher, or a philanthropist. There is neither merit nor demerit in either case, absolutely considered.

Again, the storms and passions that rage in the mental world—which men ignorantly term evil—are no more evil than the thunder that rolls through the sky, or the earthquake that bellows in the bowels of the earth. If the latter are natural and necessary so are the former. We may not—we do not—fully understand the government of the Creator; but we rest assured that the geologic foundations of a superstructure of noblest character are now being laid, broad and deep, on this lower world, that future ages may gaze on and admire the wondrous, occult workings of the Independent and Inscrutable Being, who

“Lives through all life, extends through all extent,  
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.”

There can, absolutely speaking, be no sin in *his* universe. The gordian knot as to the origin of evil is thus at once cut and opened up. The long struggle is ended. How consoling the thought! But, even granting, for the sake of argument, that man were a sinner as black and rebellious as modern orthodoxy paints him, we would lay it down as an axiom that a *finite* being cannot commit an action or a sin deserving *infinite* punishment. On this we will not now enlarge. Have theologians never con-

sidered that in running down the character of the creature they are virtually vilifying the character of the Creator?

Believing, as we do, that a belief in eternal punishment is the principal obstacle in the way of human progress and enlightenment; knowing, as we do, that the chief argument brought forward in its defence by Calvinistic minds is the Sovereignty of the Creator, we shall—although the subject is somewhat foreign to our essay—in order to dispose more effectually of the doctrine, and expose more completely the fallacy of the reasoning, clothe a *man*, not a God, with creative energy and sovereign power for a single day. (We now address our orthodox friends. We seek to win all men.) In the exercise of that power he creates, we shall suppose, as one of his first acts, a dozen flies. To display his sovereignty, he places the one half of the insects on the edge of a sugar bowl, where they feed like princes. The other half—in order that he may still further display his sovereignty remember—are handed over to a cruel Nero, who instantly begins pulling off the wings and the feet of the helpless darlings—the creator himself all the while luxuriating in the tortures inflicted. Who would not call this man a monster as heartless as the bloody Alva that bathed the Netherlands in blood? The universal voice of humanity would pronounce him a wretch almost unfit to live. Besides, is it not clear as noon-day that the fact of his possessing sovereign power, so that he could have made all the insects to be happy, increases, instead of diminishes, the guilt and ferocity of the man? If we can thus judge in regard to a man, shall we believe on the testimony of writers comparatively unknown in history, or rather on the testimony of modern orthodox preachers—for primitive Christians, many of the best and wisest among them, had no such belief—that the Being whose name is Love (“God is Love”—*John*) creates intelligent creatures to make them eternally miserable, even admitting that they do commit sin? Had God no higher ends in view than these? Is that the consummation of all the mighty plans that have been going forward from eternity? Who

*dare* say that it is? Who *dare* issue the libel? Moreover—Does there exist a demon so cruel that would keep any human being, even his murderer, in a red-hot furnace for a week (presuming he could live for that time)? No. Shall we thus judge in regard to the creature who is said to be wholly depraved and desperately wicked, and conclude that the Being who fitted up these heavens and spread out this earth for the enjoyment of his creatures shall for ever punish men in a place of unutterable agony, even granting that they were the murderers of his son? Can he never forgive? Shall he command man to show mercy and exercise none himself? Has he less benevolence than the work of his hands? We thought the man who forgave most was accounted the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and although, strictly speaking, God never forgives, because there is nothing requiring forgiveness, is it conceivable that the Creator is intellectually and morally lower than the man he bids us admire? It is absolutely impossible. The creature's love, however strong, can make no approximation to that of the Infinite Love Principle that originates all its developments in man and beast. Love is the highest, the final principle in nature (if I may so speak.) It is that to which all creation is tending. Love is the golden chain that binds in one eternal unison all the ranks of the advanced intelligences throughout the universe. It is the symphonic note that sounds in ever-blissful harmony through all the higher spheres of being.

God, in the Bible, is said to take no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (We again address our orthodox friends.) Now, if the wicked do die, it is evident that God cannot save them—and hence he is not All-powerful. His laws are stronger than himself, or rather, the devil is more powerful. On the other hand, if he is All-powerful he is not All-benevolent, and the Bible statement falls to the ground. It is a contradiction in terms to assert that any Being is both All-powerful and All-benevolent, and at the same time to tell us that he neither will nor can save all men. There is no mystery here. Some of the sublimest passages that adorn the writings of that indomi-



table strong thinker, Paul, point to universal salvation, to the glorious consummation of all things as it was presented to his mind—the future golden ages which Eastern poets have predicted and all pure minds have longed for. Here are one or two extracts which may not have been previously offered: “(God) having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed beforehand in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times *he would unite all things* (or persons) in Christ, both things which are in heaven and things which are on earth.”—(Eph. i. 9, 10.) “And having made peace through the blood of his cross, through him (Christ) to reconcile all things unto himself; through him, alike, whether they be things on the earth, or things in the heavens.”—(Col. i. 20.) The Bible is replete with similar passages but we refrain from quoting.

We are aware that the grand old book likewise contains passages of an entirely opposite nature, favouring, when taken literally, the doctrine of eternal punishment. We will not say that these passages are interpolations inserted by gross, designing translators, though there are some grounds for so saying. But we will venture to assert that an accurate Biblical Criticism, stripped as far as possible of prejudice and foregone conclusions, will resolve them all into highly coloured Orientalisms bearing no such meaning when first uttered as that now commonly attached to them. Language is continually changing its meaning. The idioms, the expressions of one language, may be and are quite different from those of another. Our cold, northern intellects generally express their ideas in plain, matter-of-fact, prosaic words. Eastern writers, on the other hand, as is well known, commonly expressed their ideas in bold, figurative sentences. Their imagination fired by the warm sun of the East, loved to clothe in dark symbol and strong metaphor every sentiment and thought of the mind.

These were never interpreted literally, and if they were, the result was only extravagant absurdity. The Bible

itself is subject to the same law. It is full of examples of such figurative, highly-coloured writing. See Moses' song, David's elegy on Saul and Jonathan, Habakkuk's prayer, with many others in the prophetic writings and the Psalms. The Scriptures speak—and every word of them is equally inspired by the unerring Jehovah according to orthodoxy—of “the earth abiding for ever;” of “the everlasting mountains;” of “the eternal hills,” &c. Do theologians accept these expressions literally? By no means. If they don't, what valid reasons can they assign for applying a different rule to those passages which relate to future punishment?

I very much fear it is a sign of our own cruelty and undevelopment to insist so much upon hell-fire for men as good as ourselves, and whom we are commanded to love as ourselves; or as if it had been proven to a demonstration that such were the Creator's intentions in regard to any of his creatures. All thinkers and learned men know full well that the question of eternal punishment is at the most a matter of probability and dispute; for the passages on which it is based are capable of various interpretations. There is no such absolute certainty of its truth as is held out by many hard-hearted divines and preachers in their addresses to those whom they are pleased to term “great sinners.” Men will never be driven into righteousness by the fears of hell-fire. The man that really loves and follows virtue does so for its own sake, and by reason of causes inherent in his constitution over which he has no control. When will the world learn this?

Again. Surely it is too much to believe that the loving Jesus who commanded us to forgive our enemies seventy times seven, and prayed for his murderers, did at the same time tell us that *his* and *our* Father was a relentless, bloodthirsty monster, that is for ever engaged in sending incalculable multitudes of his own children to regions of eternal misery and despair, even granting that their hands were red with his blood.

Methinks that there is no subject on which men display more ignorance than in their views on the character of God. To the vast majority he appears to be nothing

more than a narrow, bigoted, passionate creature, jealous of nothing but his dignity, and getting angry at the veriest trifles. What matters it to Queen Victoria though some poor, deluded Fenian believes her the cause of all the troubles that afflict unhappy Ireland? What matters it to enlightened statesmen, Bright or Gladstone for example, though enemies traduce their measures, and, mayhap, malign their character? Do they get angry and threaten to punish them? In like manner, what matters it to the high and ineffably glorious Being that inhabits infinity and eternity at one and the same time, though I should deny his existence and curse his name all the days of my life on earth? Is he to get angry, and vent his vengeance here or hereafter upon my devoted head? Certainly not. Could we so speak of the Divine Being, we would say that he would only pity my ignorance and stupidity; hasten to enlighten me, which he will do in his own time, which is always the best; love me the more, and put forth greater efforts for my salvation, which efforts could not possibly fail of consummation, seeing he is possessed of infinite wisdom and power, and can have no antagonist. "Heavenly Father, we thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

We also think that if men's minds were not warped from infancy by fearfully erroneous teachings; if their moral perceptions were not early strangled by creedal ropes; if their God-given nature was not crushed within them by human dogmatism; they would spurn the faith that makes their Maker an angry, passionate judge, sentencing the majority of the human race to eternal misery, at the very time that he has no pleasure in their death! My soul weeps at the thought that men can so think of *Him* who loves them, and will for ever continue to love them, infinitely more than father or mother, wife or brother, or all the world besides.

In view of this, I could almost say that it is horrid to be told in the name of God and Christ that many of those dear to us as our own life are, by the mere circumstance of hopping out of the body, consigned to a place of untold

suffering, there to writhe and roast for ever. Could any person with a grain of human feeling live happy, all the while persuading himself that he or his associates might one morning find themselves in an "orthodox" hell? No man fully believes the doctrine. It is a blessing unspeakable that they don't. It hangs light upon them as the mists that rest upon the mountain side. If it were realized in all its hideous deformity and fearful consequences, men would become madmen, idiots; and one vast gloom would ensepulchre the world. What of pleasure, what of learning, what of wealth, if that were the end of human life to any creature that now walks on earth. Men by their actions, however, give it the lie flat in the face, thanks to their divine instincts. Every man, so far as his own case is concerned, is a Universalist. We praise the Divine Intelligence that it is so. It passes our comprehension how educated men and refined women, with no evil in their hearts to either God or man, can submit to be told from Sabbath to Sabbath, in the name of their Creator, that they will be eternally damned if they do not accept the dogmas of human creeds, or those of a human book.

How long, O Lord! how long will men's souls be wrapped in the dungeon-clothes of priestcraft? How long will their eyes be closed to the streaming, radiant light that gilds the mountain peaks of Heaven's eternal truth? Speed the day of emancipation, O ye angel powers on high!

In thus writing we are not enemies to God, neither are we opening the flood-gates to immorality. We are fighting in the cause of truth and progress. We are fighting to vindicate the character of God, and justify his ways to man. We are fighting to roll back the stones that too long have shut the chambers of man's soul. We are fighting that the chains which bind the immortal mind may be snapped in twain, and the captive enabled to go free—free to roam this boundless universe in search of truth; free as the air which circles around the mountain tops of the Andes. We seek to make all men intelligent, virtuous, and happy. We have no love for low pleasures,

low thoughts, or low actions. Too long have men's minds been darkened, and their souls fed upon husks and stones. Too long the nourishment and living inspiration of truth have been denied them. Theologians have taken up with old, musty doctrines, that may or may not be true; they have fought over these like so many bull-dogs over a bone, or prize-fighters in a ring; while the grand moral truths that recommend themselves to mankind, and constitute the glory of Christianity, as well as of any other system that may embody them, have been allowed to sleep in un-honoured graves. We are not enemies to Christianity as taught by Christ. We admire it. We believe in it. But we hold that the genius of Christ's teachings has been entirely misunderstood and ignored by its professed interpreters. The *spirit* of these teachings, more than the teachings themselves, is that which regenerates the world. So writes the accomplished author of the recent work on the life and character of Christ, published by Macmillan and Co., of London and Cambridge. We hail with no ordinary satisfaction the appearance of that liberal and manly work. The age requires, and, what is more, demands such treatises. The advanced party in the Church of England, both clerical and lay, deserves all praise and every encouragement. May the Government, in pursuance of an enlightened policy, support them! The cause in which they are engaged is a noble one. It is nothing less than the liberty of human thought.

Pardon this long digression. The subject was so important and near to our heart that we could not contain ourselves. What is Spiritualism? Considered negatively it is not, as many suppose and conclude without even investigating its claims, a collection of foolish ghost stories and marvellous occurrences, fit only for babies. Neither is it a mass of hallucinations and wild hypotheses conjured up by frenzied brains. Far less is it a medley of old wives' superstitions and crotchets. On the contrary, it is a philosophy, broad and profound beyond all calculation; it is, when viewed in the highest aspect, the science of all sciences, that which contains and is destined

to explain them all. The physical and mental worlds are closely allied. Could we gain a deeper and more accurate insight into the latter, the former would, we are persuaded, at once unfold itself, in all its numerous ramifications, to the mental eye, in a manner unattainable by any outward exploration of its laws and phenomena. Spiritualism, as it advances and becomes understood, is, we think, destined to effect this. It deals specially with the realm of *mind*. Mind or mental philosophy, while the most important, interesting, and extensive of all studies, is, mayhap, from its nature, the least understood. The mental universe is undoubtedly subject to law as much as the material. Spiritualism, in its onward development, will lay open many of these occult and unknown laws. Who are better able than the men who have got behind and beyond this visible scene? Vast achievements in this field await the advanced and philosophic exponents of the spiritual philosophy. Let them persevere and take courage: Spiritualism is a philosophy based upon no trickery, no delusion. Its origin is thoroughly Baconian. It assumes no one thing without proof; it asserts no law without adequate data; it gives forth no statement believing that statement to be false.

History is said to repeat itself. What has occurred in the past may take place in the present, and *vice versa*. Spiritualism, viewed in one aspect, is but the return of past experience—the re-enaction of events which, though old, are ever new. To us it is the return of ancient times when suffering prophets and bleeding martyrs went about proclaiming new truths and working mighty deeds under the influence of the spirit-world. To us it is the return of Primitive Christianity in a higher and fuller unfoldment, for progress is Heaven's eternal law.

The ancient prophets were all great spiritualists and seers, or clairvoyants. The Bible is pre-eminently a *spiritual* book. Were that element expunged from its pages, the remainder would be little more than a shadow or a dead trunk. All life would vanish; all freshness and vigour cease. Jesus himself was perhaps the greatest of all

Spiritualists, and a powerful healing medium as well as normal inspirational speaker. He enjoyed blessed communion with the bright immortals—witness his transfiguration on the Mount; and, drinking inspiration and knowledge at the fountains of eternal purity and truth, he gave forth precepts so divine that the Christian world, with all its pretensions to justice and charity, is not yet sufficiently advanced to accept them. Were he now to descend from the abodes of the Spirit-land, clad in the garb of a humble unlettered carpenter, and with all his outward glory veiled, we very much fear that the men who are now loudest in his praise, and affect the strongest belief in his Divinity, in a sense that no other man ever was or is, would be the first men to cry out “Impostor!” “Dupe!” “Arrogant, pestilent fellow!” “Far better if he would mind his work!” mayhap adding, “He hath a devil and is mad.” For we have reason to believe that they, in the pride of self-conceit and selfishness, have not yet learned the first principles of true Christianity, namely, love to all men flowing from a belief in the Universal Fatherhood of God, and a willingness to accept and acknowledge truth by whomsoever taught, be the teacher the veriest beggar that crawls the street.

Peter was a medium—witness his vision of the heavenly sheet full of things clean and unclean. So was Paul, the greatest of all the apostles, whose whole soul was fired by a heavenly enthusiasm in the cause of his Master. Were any man now to disclose that he had been taken up to the *third* heavens, and seen things unutterable, how many professed Christians would believe him? And if they cannot accept the statements of living, neither can they consistently put faith in the statements of dead men. John, the Beloved, the man whose spirit had bathed and made itself white in the fountains of love, was a great seer; although many orthodox divines deny the genuineness of the Apocalypse, as they do some of the other books, and the study of it is said by one of themselves either to find a man mad or to leave him so.

Modern spiritualists are, therefore, the successors of the despised Nazarene and his humble followers who were

crucified for their loyalty to truth eighteen hundred years ago, and whose chief mission on earth was to proclaim the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of Man—those two truths underlying every other. Men may call us fanatics, visionaries, liars, fools, or even demons, for so saying. It matters not. Our faith and our knowledge stand sure. What we have seen and heard, what our hands have handled and our souls have tasted of the Word of Life, that we do know, and that we will testify.

Spiritualism, above all, is the demonstration of immortal life. With its well-ascertained and fully authenticated accounts of the return of departed friends, the theory of future existence rests upon an impregnable foundation. Instead of being forced to rely upon manifestations and occurrences which are said to have taken place eighteen hundred years ago, for our belief in a future state, Spiritualism presents living facts, ocular proofs, to living men and women, that the spirit of man, which is the man himself, does indeed live beyond the change called death. Not only so; it declares with the force of figures that cannot lie that then there opens up, before all men, a life of never-ending progress to higher and still higher degrees of knowledge and happiness.

Again—Spiritualism demonstrates that the ladder between the material and spiritual worlds is even now crowded with “numbers numberless” of angel spirits descending to hold sweet converse with friends well-beloved. The waters of life from the Throne of God (although that Throne, absolutely speaking, can have no special location, and must be everywhere) have outburst the barriers set up by Materialistic theologians, and come rolling down through every sphere of being, until, bright and sparkling, their waves have washed the sands of time. These friends, these angels—we like to view the bright side of life—come back to tell that they live and love and are happy and have not forgotten us. They come back to impart instruction and consolation to the desponding, doubting soul. They wish us to think of them as constantly near



us, and not to sorrow at their departure. And when we, too, are called to bid adieu to this tenement of clay, this shell of dust, they shall be waiting to meet us on the other side of the mystic river. Oh! how ecstatic the thought of the happy, inexpressibly happy, welcome we shall receive from departed loved ones, as our feet touch the shores of the heavenly country! We rejoice that the Creator, in the exuberance of ineffable love, has seen fit to call us into being to enjoy these prospects and these realities.

Once more—Through Spiritualism, the intense inward longings of the soul for immortality and reunion with departed friends, have been met and satisfied. They have been proved to be the gifts of a Father who keeps faith with all his offspring, and implants no instincts or desires which he will not in his own time and way fully gratify. In these intuitionist longings of the soul we read distinctly the evidences of a future existence; in these aspirations of the inner man we read distinctly the proofs of our immortality. Whence those thoughts “that wander through eternity,” that roam through universal nature, up and down the heights of heaven? Are they not the beginnings of a higher life? In them, I discover the throes of undying being within me; in them, I read the first flutterings of the caged bird for emancipation.

Spiritualism! All hail, then, to thy presence. Heavenly is thy origin, heavenly is thy mission, and heavenly is thy destiny. Fair lady of the spheres, thy very name is magical in this practically infidel age. At thy touch the veil that hung over our future state has been swept away, and mortals—I should say immortals—have been permitted to look beyond the river of death, beholding there a home of eternal life for all mankind. Spiritualism to us is the lamp, more wonderful than that of Aladdin; to us it is the magic candlestick, far more brilliant in its luminosity and marvellous in its performances, than that of the Arabian tales—which has lighted up the gloomy caverns of the grave; it is, in fact, the philosopher's stone so long sought for, that transmutes all our hopes and

aspirations into living, ever-present facts and golden, imperishable verities, fit to cheer our weary, way-worn spirits while on this plane of existence. Speaking not of earth nor time, Spiritualism carries our thoughts beyond the earth-scenes, where the lower faculties and feelings of man's nature work perpetually, beyond the materialistic pursuits and pleasures of the day, up and on to the blissful spheres of the Summer Land with its populations of purest love and wisdom; it transfers them from the selfish and sensual to the noble, the true, and the free. Contemplating Spiritualism in its highest phases, the higher principles and affections of our nature are made to repose in the crystalline firmament of uncreated light; they are made to drink at the fountains of eternal truth, which flow from the Great Unknowable into the channels of an infinite universe. Death, in the light of Spiritualism, no longer comes robed as the King of Terrors, crushing out the life hopes of humanity. The fabled monster now appears as the messenger of our Father admitting us to a higher life and a more blissful immortality. Spiritualism is emphatically the cause of human progress and mental freedom. Not much longer shall the eternal truth of God be held to consist in a few ill-defined and undefinable dogmas. Not much longer shall his eternal word be linked to soul-paralysing doctrines that make the blood run cold. Spiritualism declares man's divinity, and consequent nobility. It proclaims his aspirations to be heavenward—up to his God-source. It bids us no longer look into the legends of a dead past for life and salvation, but points us to the living inspiration of ministering spirits both in and out of the body. It proclaims that God is sole governor of his own universe, allowing no Prince of Darkness to divide his empire, and carry off to eternal perdition the greater portion of the race.

All that and much more Spiritualism is and has done. It recalls happy memories of friends and acquaintances that lived on earth, and shows them still living, loving, and happy, according to their several capacities and desires, in the realms beyond death and the grave. Had we a

father who was all in all to us, Spiritualism, thrice blessed, comes to tell us that that father is still the same as when on earth. Death destroys none of the higher faculties and feelings of man's nature. It only purifies and ennobles them. Had we a mother whose every care was directed to our well-being, who loved us with that deep affection which only a mother can experience, Spiritualism has come to tell that her thoughts are still of us; that the stream of maternal love floweth clear and fresh and full as ever from out the depths of her heart. Had we a son whom we loved with a strong, engrossing love, who was our only hope and stay, Spiritualism, like a welcome harbinger, comes to tell that death severs not the tie, but that he only has gone before to join the angel-bands of immortal workers in the fields of higher life. Had we a wife, a sister, a daughter, a lover, whose gentle voices and light footsteps were sweet as music to the ear, we need not sorrow at their departure, for Spiritualism has come to tell that we shall rejoin them, never more to part, when life's short journey on earth is ended. Had we a darling child full of fun and youthful innocence, whose merry prattle charmed life's toils away, Spiritualism, with its soul-cheering truths and living proofs of immortality, bids us not be cast down, for the young plant of hope has only been transferred to blossom in lands of fairer clime than this cold, down-trodden earth.

Shall we now be told that Spiritualism is a work of the devil? What! Is it a work of the devil to proclaim that God is our father and man our brother; that our departed friends still live, love, and are happy, and have not forgotten us; that there is a life of eternal progression before all men, of whatever colour or condition; and finally, "that the life which now is shapes the life that is to be"?

The very fact that Spiritualism is stigmatised as of the devil is to us a strong proof of its *heavenly* origin. History tells that every new truth, every invention, every improvement, has been set down to the agency of the Evil One. Every reformer, every pioneer in religion or philosophy,

has been a servant of the Prince of Darkness. Let us recall a few examples. Christ, the reformer *par excellence*, who stands on the apex of the pyramid of moral teaching, was an agent of the devil in the estimation of the self-righteous, hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees of old, who are worthily represented by the priests and popes of modern churches. Galileo, when he maintained the revolution of the earth round the sun, was, in the eyes of Romish divines, propagating heresy, and under the guidance of Satan. Who has been in error? Will men not learn by experience? The old proverb says it teaches *fools*. Luther, when he proclaimed the right of free inquiry and free speech, was inspired by the Enemy of God and man. Knox, too, was a madman, and a child of Beelzebub. Geology, to many narrow minds of the present day, is an offshoot of hell, since it destroys—which we rejoice it does most effectually—one or two of their favourite dogmas regarding the introduction of death and sin, and the fall of man. Above all, Spiritualism, the latest and best proof of God's love to man is, by the fiercely exclusive bigots of a false theology, considered the greatest achievement of Satanic subtlety in this or any age, and triumphantly held up to their deluded followers as the fulfilment of Scripture prophecy—"That in the last times false teachers should arise teaching damnable heresies;" all the while forgetting, wittingly or unwittingly, that they themselves may be these false teachers, seeing that in many points they have departed from the faith once delivered to the saints. The book which they, theoretically at least, esteem to be divine, thus speaks—"And it shall come to pass, afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams; your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and the hand-maidens in those days will I pour out my Spirit." The Christ himself says to his disciples—"But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it

is not ye that speak but the Holy Spirit." Do modern theologians ever think of carrying out these instructions? No. Why? Because they have not the Spirit; they have no communion with the unseen world whence the highest and purest inspiration flows into man's mind. Having lost that they are no more his servants or disciples. They have departed from the faith—they have sealed up the source of their greatness and power. Now, the men who pretend to be his followers and servants must be sent to college, where they are initiated into the rites and ceremonies, the parts and portions of a huge fabric or system, which human learning and ignorance combined have constructed; and of which the Christ that walked the Judean valleys eighteen hundred years ago, we are persuaded, knew nothing. They must now labour hard to produce a sermon which, in nine cases out of ten, is not worth listening to, and, what is more, ought not to be listened to.

Alas! alas! the breath has fled. Nothing but dead bones remain. The form may be beautiful without, but within it is cold and lifeless, full of uncleanness and other abominations which pollute the atmosphere of the soul. "Ichabod! Ichabod! the glory is departed."

On the other hand, Spiritualism, in many of its phases, in its trance and inspirational speakers, clearly points to a fulfilment of the passages just quoted; while, in the wonderful cures performed by our healing mediums, in many cases by the simple laying on of hands, the days of prophets and apostles, the days of primitive Christianity, have once more returned to earth; and the promise of the great Medium, when he said, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father," is being realised. The millennial epoch prophesied and sung of old has begun; the first droppings of the universal shower have already descended upon this parched and withered earth.

Coming back to our subject, we assert, most emphatically, that Spiritualism is not a work of the devil. If it were, his Satanic majesty must have changed his tactics

as well as his disposition, of late, becoming the champion of all that is good and true, pure and elevating; and we for once are indeed ready, nay, happy to follow such a leader. But no, we repeat it, Spiritualism is not a work of the devil. We throw back the accusation in disdain, and with all the force of our moral nature. Never was a grosser lie, a more hateful misrepresentation, or a blacker calumny, attempted to be flung in the fair face of God's eternal truth than this vain effort of sectarian bigotry to fasten the work of God himself on the shoulders of the Evil One. Is it a work of the devil to satisfy the dearest hopes of humanity? Is it a damnable, soul-destroying process which proves that the strong, intuitional aspirations of the soul are something more than mere dreams? Is it a black art that demonstrates to a man his immortality, and assures him of a happy existence beyond the grave whenever he is worthy to receive it? Is it a hellish plot to tell us that our friends not only live, but also can return to earth, and are even now returning? If a tree is not known by its fruit, what other test shall we apply? Let the men who deal in *devilism* answer. The day is coming when Spiritualism and its teachings will be recognised as the cause of truth and justice as much as the emancipation of the slave. The day is coming when the dogmas of hell, sin, and the fall will be recognised as untenable as the system of Ptolemy. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Appealing to intelligent men and women, we would now say—Is there anything more rational than to hold that our friends desire to return to earth, and commune with those left behind? Death surely does not wipe out all recollection of past life. It surely does not dry up every sympathy of the human soul. When a father arrives in a distant land his first care is to inform his family in the mother country of his safe arrival, of his prospects, of his condition, and the nature of the land where he has gone to dwell, with the character of its inhabitants, as far as he has learned. If that be the case with a man while on earth, shall we believe, without any

proof whatever, that every such feeling becomes extinct on the man's entry to the spirit world? God forbid the thought. We are not foolish enough to suppose that those things which render man dear while in the body are for ever annihilated when he puts on immortality. If our departed friends are, then, solicitous about us, shall we turn away in horror and disgust from that which declares they are even now returning to earth to exhibit their love and regard? Shall we refuse to listen to their entreaties because their utterance comes across the narrow stream? In short, shall we treat Spiritualism as a humbug and lie, unworthy of a moment's serious reflection or investigation? We hope better things of intelligent men and women, with loving hearts that stretch beyond the boundaries of time. Rest assured, Spiritualism is not a subject to be laughed at or trifled with. It is a mighty truth. Allow, therefore, no prejudices or preconceived notions to keep you from an investigation of its claims. Allow no fears of an imaginary hell, no threats of damnatory theologians, to keep you enthralled. The mind was made to be free; nay, it pants for freedom as the chained captive cries for deliverance. Men may sooner stay the earth in her annual revolution than bind for ever the immortal mind. We court inquiry. We ask no favour. We only desiderate the Baconian spirit of investigation, and we are not afraid of the result. Spiritualism, with far more truth than Dr. Chalmers said of modern Christianity, has nothing to conceal, nothing to keep back. It is open as the canopy of heaven. We have no confessions of faith, no unalterable creeds to tie a man in. Confessions are for babies, and creeds for those who cannot or dare not think. We have no irrational dogmas to crush down a man's throat whether he will or not, thereby choking the uprisings of the Divine Spirit within him. "Our religion is love—'tis the noblest and purest." We have therefore, no impatient Deity biding his time or "nursing his wrath" to torture poor mortals the more cruelly for acts they could not help, and for sins (so-called) they were never conscious of committing. Enlightened reason is our only

guide and ultimate court of appeal. Reason is the God-principle within us—not conscience, which is simply the creature of training. Deny this, and the Brahmin, the Buddhist, or the Mohammedan can claim perfection for his system equally with the Christian. Deny this, and men are left at the mercy of any fool or bigot that may pretend to have seen Him who cannot be seen, and been by Him specially commissioned to declare his will. While culling from all bibles and all religions, we worship neither men nor books. We are not idolaters, thank God. The belief in an infallible book is not only a silly delusion, but it has proved the fruitful parent of all the persecutions and theological strifes that have cursed humanity. God is ever present in the human soul. His inspiration through the channels of nature is confined to no age or people. He inspires men now the same as two thousand years ago. The age of prophets and apostles, truth-seekers and truth-finders, noble minds and nobler workers, will last while the world lasts. While asking men to join us, we want no nominal believers; we desire no cold, half-hearted professors, bound by interests and conventionalisms. We want men of strong nerve and iron will, of massive intellect and broad perceptions, to enter heart and soul into the great work of emancipating England from religious despotism.

In conclusion, we would seek to convince men that Christianity, as taught by its founder, and Modern Spiritualism, are in no wise antagonistic. The one is the complement of the other. They are and ought to be twin-sisters walking hand-in-hand “up the heights of glory.” They are and ought to be fair celestial maidens all aglow with supernal radiance, leading us to a blessed immortality and a holy life.

Once more. After weighing all the arguments, *pro* and *con*, we feel confident, that if the spirits of the departed cannot return to earth *now*, the only rational inference is they *never* could return; and that if the modern spiritual manifestations can be accounted for upon any merely physical laws *devoid of intelligence or consciousness*, the belief,



however deep-rooted and fondly cherished, in all past occurrences of a like nature, falls to the ground, and every religion that has been reared upon the foundations of that belief is thereby destroyed; all confidence, all expectation of a future state is removed, and man's life deprived of almost every motive to noble disinterested action. These are our beliefs, these our conclusions, gainsay them who may.



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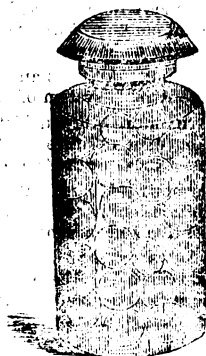
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