

# SPIRITUALISM.

BY MRS. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

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[The following was written for, and published in the *Christian Union*. It was reprinted in THE PHRENOLOGICAL JOURNAL in 1870. We present it here, as in some measure explanatory of all the matter which precedes it. There are many who do not accept all that is claimed to be true, in Modern Spiritualism, who will entertain the moderate views expressed by The Author of Uncle Tom's Cabin. EDITOR.]

IT is claimed that there are in the United States four million Spiritualists. The perusal of the advertisements in any one of the weekly newspapers devoted to this subject will show that there is a system organized all over the Union to spread these sentiments. From fifty to a hundred, and sometimes more, of lecturers advertise in a single paper, to speak up and down the land; and lyceums—progressive lyceums for children, spiritual pic-nics, and other movements of the same kind, are advertised. This kind of thing has been going on from year to year, and the indications now are that it is increasing rather than diminishing.

It is claimed by the advocates of these sentiments that the number of those who boldly and openly profess them is exceeded by the greater number of those who are *secretly* convinced, but who are unwilling to encounter the degree of obloquy or ridicule which they would probably meet on an open avowal.

All these things afford matter for grave thought to those to whom none of the great and deep movements of society are indifferent. When we think how very tender and sacred are the feelings with which this has to do—what power and permanency they always must have, we can not but consider such a movement of society entitled at least to the most serious and thoughtful consideration.

Our own country has just been plowed and seamed by a cruel war. The bullet that has pierced thousands of faithful breasts has cut the nerve of life and hope in thousands of homes. What yearning toward the invisible state, what agonized longings must have gone up as the sound of mournful surges, during these years succeeding the war! Can we wonder that any form of religion, or of superstition, which professes in the least to mitigate the anguish of that cruel separation, and to break

that dreadful silence by any voice or token, has hundreds of thousands of disciples? If on review of the spiritualistic papers and pamphlets we find them full of vague wanderings and wild and purposeless flights of fancy, can we help pitying that craving of the human soul which all this represents and so imperfectly supplies?

The question arises, Has not the Protestant religion neglected to provide some portion of the true spiritual food of the human soul, and thus produced this epidemic craving? It is often held to be a medical fact that morbid appetites are the blind cry of nature for something needed in the bodily system which is lacking. The wise nurse or mother does not hold up to ridicule the poor little culprit who secretly picks a hole in the plastering that he may eat the lime; she considers within herself what is wanting in this little one's system, and how this lack shall be more judiciously and safely supplied. If it be phosphate of lime for the bones which nature is thus blindly crying for, let us give it to him more palatably and under more attractive forms.

So with the epidemic cravings of human society. The wise spiritual pastor or master would inquire what is wanting to these poor souls that they are thus with hungry avidity rushing in a certain direction, and devouring with unhealthy eagerness all manner of crudities and absurdities.

May it not be spiritual food, of which their mother, the Church, has abundance, which she has neglected to set before them?

Now, if we compare the religious teachings of the present century with those of any past one, we shall find that the practical spiritualistic belief taught by the Bible has to a great extent dropped out of it.

Let us begin with the time of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more evident in reading his life than that he was acting all the time in view of *unseen* and spiritual influences, which were more pronounced and operative to him than any of the *visible* and materialistic phenomena of the present life. In this respect the conduct of Christ, if imitated in the present day, would subject a man to the imputation of superstition or credulity. He imputed things to the direct agency of invisible spirits acting in the affairs of life, that we, in the same circumstances, attribute only to the constitutional liabilities of the individual acted upon by force of circumstances.

As an example of this, let us take his language toward the Apostle Peter. With the habits of modern Christianity, the caution of Christ to Peter would have been expressed much on this fashion: "Simon, Simon, thou art impulsive, and liable to be carried away with sudden impressions. The Jews are about to make an attack on me which will endanger thee."

This was the exterior view of the situation, but our Lord did not take it. He said, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail

not." This Satan was a person ever present in the mind of Christ. He was ever in his view as the invisible force by which all the visible antagonistic forces were ruled. When his disciples came home in triumph to relate the successes of their first preaching tour, Christ said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." When the Apostle Peter rebuked him for prophesying the tragical end of his earthly career, Christ answered not him, but the invisible spirit whose influence over him he recognized: "Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art an offense unto me."

When the Saviour's last trial approached, he announced the coming crisis in the words, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." When he gave himself into the hands of the Sanhedrim, he said, "This is your hour and that of the powers of darkness." When disputing with the unbelieving Jews, he told them that they were of their father, the devil; that he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; that when he spoke a lie he spoke of his own, for he was a liar, and the father of lies.

In short, the life of Christ, as viewed by himself, was not a conflict with enemies *in the flesh*, but with an invisible enemy, artful, powerful, old as the foundations of the world, and ruling by his influences over evil spirits and men in the flesh.

The same was the doctrine taught by the Apostles. In reading the Epistles we see in the strongest language how the whole visible world was up in arms against them. St. Paul gives this catalogue of his physical and worldly sufferings, proving his right to apostleship mainly by perseverance in persecution. "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned; thrice have I suffered shipwreck—a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren."

One would say with all this, there was a sufficient array of physical and natural causes against St. Paul to stand for something. In modern language—yea, in the language of good modern Christians—it would be said "What is the use of taking into account any devil or any invisible spirits to account for Paul's trials and difficulties?—it is enough that the whole world has set itself against what he teaches—Jew and Gentile are equally antagonistic to it."

But St. Paul says in the face of all this, "We are not wrestling with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and the leaders of the darkness of this world, and against wicked spirits in high places;" and St. Peter, recognizing the sufferings and persecutions of the early Christians, says, "Be sober, be vigilant." Why? "Because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour."

In like manner we find in the discourses of our Lord and the Apostles the recognition of a counteracting force of good spirits. When Nathaniel, one of his early disciples, was astonished at his spiritual insight, he said to him, "Thou shalt see greater things than these! Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man." When he spoke of the importance of little children, he announced that each one of them had a guardian angel who beheld the face of God. When he was transfigured on the Mount, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, and talked with him of his death that he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. In the hour of his agony in the garden, an angel appeared and ministered to him. When Peter drew a sword to defend him, he said, "Put up thy sword. Thinkest thou that I can not now pray to my Father, and he will give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Thus, between two contending forces of the invisible world was Christianity inaugurated. During the primitive ages the same language was used by the Fathers of the church, and has ever since been traditional.

But we need not say that the fashion of modern Protestant theology and the custom of modern Protestant Christianity have been less and less of this sort.

We hear from good Christians, and from Christian ministers, talk of this sort: A great deal is laid to the poor devil that he never thought of. If men would take care of their own affairs the devil will let them alone. We hear it said that there is no *evidence* of the operation of invisible spirits in the course of human affairs. It is all a mere matter of physical, mental, and moral laws working out their mission with unvarying certainty.

But is it a fact, then, that the great enemy whom Christ so constantly spoke of is dead? Are the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world, whom Paul declared to be the real opponents that the Christian has to arm against, all dead? If that great enemy whom Christ declared the source of all opposition to himself is yet living, with his nature unchanged, there is as much reason to look for his action behind the actions of men and the vail of material causes as there was in Christ's time; and if the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world, that Paul speaks of, have not died, then they are now, as they were in his day, the *principal* thing the Christian should keep in mind and against which he should arm.

And, on the other hand, if it is true, as Christ declared, that every little child in him has a guardian angel, who always beholds the Father's face; if, as St. Paul says, it is true that the angels all are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation," then it follows that every one of us is being constantly watched over, cared for, warned, guided, and ministered to by invisible spirits.

Now let us notice in what regions and in what classes of mind the modern spiritualistic religion has most converts.



To a remarkable degree it takes minds which have been denuded of all faith in spirits; minds which are empty, swept of all spiritual belief, are the ones into which any amount of spirits can enter and take possession.

That is to say, the human soul, in a state of starvation for one of its normal and most necessary articles of food, devours right and left every marvel of modern spiritualism, however crude.

The old angelology of the Book of Daniel and the Revelation is poetical and grand. Daniel sees lofty visions of beings embodying all the grand forces of nature. He is told of invisible princes who rule the destiny of nations! Michael, the guardian prince of the Jews, is hindered twenty-one days from coming, at the prayer of Daniel, by the conflicting princes of Media and Persia. In the New Testament, how splendid is the description of the angel of the resurrection! "And behold, there was a great earthquake, and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it! His countenance was as the lightning, and his raiment white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers did shake and become as dead men." We have here spiritualistic phenomena worthy of a God—worthy our highest conceptions—elevated, poetic, mysterious, grand!

And communities, and systems of philosophy and theology, which have explained all the supernatural art of the Bible, or which are always apologizing for it, blushing for it, ignoring and making the least they can of it—such communities will go into spiritualism by hundreds and by thousands. Instead of angels, whose countenance is as the lightning, they will have ghosts and tippings and tappings and rappings. Instead of the great beneficent miracles recorded in Scripture, they will have senseless clatterings of furniture and breaking of crockery. Instead of Christ's own promise, "He that keepeth my commandments, I will love him and manifest *myself*," they will have manifestations from all sorts of anonymous spirits, good, bad, and indifferent.

Well, then, what is the way to deal with spiritualism? Precisely what the hunter uses when he stands in the high, combustible grass and sees the fire sweeping around him on the prairies. He sets fire to the grass all around him, and it burns *from* instead of *to* him, and thus he fights fire with fire. Spiritualism, in its crudities and errors, can be met only in that way. The true spiritualism of the Bible is what will be the only remedy for the cravings of that which is false and delusive.

Some years ago the writer of this, in deep sorrow for the sudden death of a son, received the following letter from a Roman Catholic priest, in a neighboring town. He was a man eminent for holiness of life and benevolence, and has since entered the rest of the blessed.

DEAR MADAM: In the deep affliction that has recently visited you I implore you to remember well that there is a communion of spirits of the departed just, which death can not prevent, and which, with prayer, can impart much consolation. This, with the condolence of every parent and

child in my flock, I beg leave to offer you, wishing, in the mean time, to assure you of my heartfelt regret and sympathy.

Yours, very truly,

JAMES O'DONNELL,  
Catholic Pastor, Lawrence.

What is this communion which death can not prevent, and which with prayer can impart consolation? It is known in the Apostles' Creed as

"THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS."

When it is considered what social penalties attach to the profession of this faith, one must admit that only some very strong cause can induce persons of standing and established reputation openly to express beliefs of this kind. The penalty is loss of confidence and being reputed of unsound mind. It is not an easy thing to profess belief in anything which destroys one's reputation for sanity, yet undoubtedly this is the result.

It must also be admitted that most of the literature which has come into existence in this way is of a doubtful and disreputable kind, and of a tendency to degrade rather than elevate our conceptions of a spiritual state.

Yet such is the hunger, the longing, the wild craving of the human soul for the region of future immortality, its home-sickness for its future home, its perishing anguish of desire for the beloved ones who have been torn away from it, and to whom in every nerve it still throbs and bleeds, that professed words and messages from that state, however unworthy, are met with a trembling agony of eagerness, a willingness to be deceived, most sorrowful to witness.

But any one who judges of the force of this temptation merely by what is published in the *Banner of Light*, and other papers of that class, has little estimate of what there is to be considered in the way of existing phenomena under this head.

The cold scientists who, without pity and without sympathy, have supposed that they have had under their dissecting knives the very phenomena which have deluded their fellows, mistake. They have not seen them, and in the cold, unsympathizing mood of science, they never can see them. The experiences that have most weight with multitudes who believe more than they dare to utter, are secrets deep as the grave, sacred as the innermost fibers of their souls—they can not bring their voices to utter them except in some hour of uttermost confidence and to some friend of tried sympathy. They know what they have seen and what they have heard. They know the examinations they have made they know the inexplicable results, and, like Mary of old, they keep all these sayings and ponder them in their hearts. They have no sympathy with the vulgar, noisy, outward phenomena of tippings and rappings and

signs and wonders. They have no sympathy with the vulgar and profane attacks on the Bible, which form part of the utterances of modern seers; but they can not forget, and they can not explain things which in sacred solitude or under circumstances of careful observation have come under their own notice. They have no wish to make converts—they shrink from conversation, they wait for light; but, when they hear all these things scoffed at, they think within themselves—Who knows?

We have said that the strong, unregulated, and often false spiritualistic current of to-day is a result of the gradual departure of Christendom from the true supernaturalism of primitive ages. We have shown how Christ and his Apostles always regarded the invisible actors on the stage of human existence as more powerful than the visible ones; that they referred to their influence over the human spirit and over the forces of nature, things which modern rationalism refers only to natural laws. We can not illustrate the departure of modern society from primitive faith better than in a single instance—a striking one.

The Apostles' Creed is the best formula of Christian faith—it is common to the Greek, the Roman, the Reformed Churches, and published by our Pilgrim Fathers in the New England Primer in connection with the Assembly's Catechism. It contains the following profession :

"I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of Sins," etc.

In this sentence, according to Bishop Pearson on the Creed, are announced four important doctrines : 1. The Holy Ghost ; 2. The Holy Catholic Church ; 3. The Communion of Saints ; 4. The Forgiveness of Sins.

To each one of these the good Bishop devotes some twenty or thirty pages of explanation.

But it is customary with many clergymen in reading to slur the second and third articles together, thus : " I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints "—that is to say, I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, which is the communion of saints.

Now, in the standard edition of the English Prayer Book, and in all the editions published from it, the separate articles of faith are divided by semicolons—thus : " The Holy Ghost ; The Holy Catholic Church ; The Communion of Saints." But in our American editions the punctuation is altered to suit a modern rationalistic idea—thus : " The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints."

The doctrine of the Communion of Saints, as held by primitive Christians, and held still by the Roman and Greek Churches, is thus dropped out of view in the modern Protestant Episcopal reading.

But what is this doctrine ? Bishop Pearson devotes a long essay to it, ending thus :

Every one may learn by this what he is to understand by this part of the article in which he professeth to believe in the Communion of Saints.

Thereby he is conceived to express thus much :

"I am fully persuaded of this, as a necessary and infallible truth, that such persons as are truly sanctified in the Church of Christ, while they live in the crooked generations of men and struggle with all the miseries of this world, have fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost . . . . . that they partake of the kindness and care of the blessed angels who take delight in ministrations for their benefit, that . . . . . they have an intimate union and conjunction with all the saints on earth as being members of Christ; NOR IS THIS UNION SEPARATED BY THE DEATH OF ANY, but they have communion with all the saints who, from the death of Abel, have departed this life in the fear of God, and now enjoy the presence of the Father, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

*"And thus I believe in the Communion of Saints."*

Now, we appeal to the consciences of modern Christians whether this statement of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints represents the doctrine that they have heard preached from the pulpit, and whether it has been made practically so much the food and nourishment of their souls as to give them all the support under affliction and bereavement which it certainly is calculated to do ?

Do they really believe themselves to partake in their life-struggle of the kindness and care of the blessed angels who take delight in ministrations for their benefit? Do they believe they are united by intimate bonds with all Christ's followers? Do they believe that the union is not separated by the death of any of them, but that they have communion with all the saints who have departed this life in the faith and now enjoy the presence of the Father ?

Would not a sermon conceived in the terms of this standard treatise excite an instant sensation as tending toward the errors of Spiritualism ? And let us recollect that the Apostles' Creed from which this is taken was as much a standard with our Pilgrim Fathers as the Cambridge Platform.

If we look back to Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*, we shall find that the belief in the ministration of angels and the conflict of invisible spirits, good and evil, in the affairs of men, was practical and influential in the times of our fathers.

If we look at the first New England Systematic Theology, that of Dr. Dwight, we shall find the subject of Angels and Devils and their ministry among men fully considered.

In the present theological course at Andover that subject is wholly omitted. What may be the custom in other theological seminaries of the present day we will not say.

We will now show what the teaching and the feeling of the primitive church was on the subject of the departed dead and the ministrations of angels. In *Coleman's Christian Antiquities*, under the head of Death and Burial of the Early Christians, we find evidence of the great and wide difference which existed between the Christian community and all the



other world, whether Jews or heathen, in regard to the vividness of their conceptions of immortality. The Christian who died was not counted as lost from their number—the fellowship with him was still unbroken. The theory and the practice of the Christians was to look on the departed as no otherwise severed from them than the man who has gone to New York is divided from his family in Boston. He is not within the scope of the senses, he can not be addressed, but he is the same person, with the same heart, still living and loving, and partners with them of all joys and sorrows.

But while they considered personal identity and consciousness unchanged and the friend as belonging to them, as much after death as before, they regarded his death as an advancement, an honor, a glory. It was customary, we are told, to celebrate the day of his death as his birth-day—the day when he was born to new immortal life. Tertullian, who died in the year 210, in his treatise called the *Soldier's Chaplet*, says: "We make anniversary oblations for the dead—for their birth-days," meaning the day of their death. In another place he says, "It was the practice of a widow to pray for the soul of her deceased husband, desiring on his behalf present refreshment or rest, and a part in the first resurrection," and offering annually for him oblation on the day of his *falling asleep*. By this gentle term the rest of the body in the grave was always spoken of among Christians. It is stated that on these anniversary days of commemorating the dead they were used to make a feast, inviting both clergy and people, but especially the poor and needy, the widows and orphans, that it might not only be a memorial of rest to the dead, but a memorial of a sweet savor in the sight of God.

A Christian funeral was in every respect a standing contrast to the lugubrious and depressing gloom of modern times. Palms and olive branches were carried in the funeral procession, and the cypress was rejected as symbolizing gloom. Psalms and hymns of a joyful and triumphant tone were sung around the corpse while it was kept in the house and on the way to the grave. St. Chrysostom, speaking of funeral services, quotes passages from the psalms and hymns that were in common use, thus:

"What mean our psalms and hymns? Do we not glorify God and give him thanks that he hath crowned him that has departed, that he hath delivered him from trouble, that he hath set him free from all fear? Consider what thou singest at the time. 'Turn again to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath rewarded thee;' and again: 'I will fear no evil because thou art with me;' and again: 'Thou art my refuge from the affliction that compasseth me about.' Consider what these psalms mean. If thou believest the things which thou sayest to be true, why dost thou weep and lament and make a pageantry and a mock of thy singing? If thou believest them *not* to be true, why dost thou play the hypocrite so much as to sing?"

Coleman says, also:

"The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered at funerals and often at the grave itself. By this rite it was professed that the communion of saints was still perpetuated between the living and the dead. It was a favorite idea that both still continued members of the same mystical body, the same on earth and in heaven."—*Antiq.*, p. 413.

Coleman says, also, that the early Christian utterly discarded all the Jewish badges and customs of mourning, such as sackcloth and ashes and rent garments, and severely censured the Roman custom of wearing black.

St. Augustine says: "Why should we disfigure ourselves with black, unless we would imitate unbelieving nations, not only in their wailing for the dead, but also in their mourning apparel? Be assured, these are foreign and unlawful usages."

He says, also: "Our brethren are not to be mourned for being liberated from this world when we know that they are not *omitted* but *permitted*, receding from us only that they may precede us, so that journeying and voyaging before us they are to be *desired* but not lamented. Neither should we put on black raiment for them when they have already taken their white garments; and occasion should not be given to the Gentiles that they should rightly and justly reprove us, that we grieve over those as extinct and lost who we say are now alive with God, and the faith that we profess by voice and speech we deny by the testimony of our heart and bosom."

Are not many of the usages and familiar forms of speech of modern Christendom a return to old heathenism? Are they not what St. Augustine calls a repudiation of the Christian faith? The black garments, the funeral dreariness, the mode of speech which calls a departed friend lost—have they not become the almost invariable rule in Christian life?

So really and truly did the first Christians believe that their friends were still one with themselves, that they considered them even in their advanced and glorified state a subject of prayers.

Prayer for each other was to the first Christians a reality. The intimacy of their sympathy, the entire oneness of their life, made prayer for each other a necessity, and they prayed for each other instinctively as they prayed for themselves. So, St. Paul says "*Always in every* prayer of mine making request for you always with joy." Christians are commanded with it ceasing to pray for each other. As their faith forbade them to consider the departed as lost or ceasing to exist, or in any way being out of their fellowship and communion, it did not seem to them strange or improper to yield to that impulse of the loving heart which naturally breathes to the Heavenly Father the name of its beloved. On the contrary, it was a custom in the earliest Christian times, in the solemn service of the Eucharist, to commend to God in a memorial prayer the souls of their friends *departed*, but not *dead*. In Coleman's *Antiquities*, and other works of the same kind, many instances of this are given. We select some:

Arnobius, in his treatise against the heathen writers, probably in 305,

speaking of the prayers offered after the consecration of the elements in the Lord's Supper, says "that Christians prayed for pardon and peace in behalf of the living and dead." Cyril, of Jerusalem, reports the prayer made after consecrating the elements in Holy Communion in these words :

"We offer this sacrifice in memory of those who have fallen asleep before us, first patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that God by their prayers and supplications may receive our supplications and those we pray for, our holy fathers and bishops, and all that have fallen asleep before us, believing it is of great advantage to their souls to be prayed for while the holy and tremendous sacrifice lies upon the altar."

A memorial of this custom has come into the Protestant Church in the Episcopal Eucharistic service where occur these words : "And we also bless thy Holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear, beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that we with them may be partakers of thy Heavenly Kingdom." It will be seen here the progress of an idea, its corruption and its reform.

The original idea with the primitive Christian was this : "My friend is neither dead nor changed. He is only gone before me, and is promoted to higher joy ; but he is still mine and I am his. Still can I pray for him, still can he pray for me ; and as when he was here on earth we can be mutually helped by each other's prayers."

Out of this root—so simple and so sweet—grew idolatrous exaggerations of saint worship and a monstrous system of bargain and sale of prayers for the dead. The Reformation swept all this away—and, as usual with reformations, swept away a portion of the primitive truth—but it retained still the Eucharistic memorial of departed friends as a fragment of primitive simplicity.

The Church, furthermore, appointed three festivals of commemoration of these spiritual members of the great Church Invi-sible with whom they held fellowship—the festivals of All Souls, of All Angels, of All Saints.

Two of these are still retained in the Episcopal Church the feast of St. Michael and All Angels, and the feast of All Saints. These days are derived from those yearly anniversaries which were common in the primitive ages

[Here we have a formal deprecation of the tendency of modern orthodoxy to withdraw from what was once regarded as a proper religious belief and sentiment, and which modern Spiritualists warmly accept, and make one of the chief grounds for their doctrine of intercommunication between the departed dead and the living. We expect to give our readers other papers by Mrs. Stowe in continuation of her discussion on the subject.

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In the following letter, or extract from a letter, from Mr. Andrew Jackson Davis, one of the leading lights and exponents of Spiritualism at the

present day, we have a voice from the *inside*, furnishing some information with regard to the state of spiritualistic affairs in America, and some of the expected results of the movement.]

"Spiritualism, for the most part, is a *shower* from the realm of intelligences and uncultured affections. It is rapidly irrigating and fertilizing everything that has root and the seed-power to grow. It is starting up the half-dead trees of Sectarianism, causing the most miserable weeds to grow rapid and rank, and of course, attracting very general attention to religious feelings and super-terrene existences.

"As an effect of this spiritualistic rain, you may look for an immense harvest of both wheat and tares—the grandest growths in great principles and ideas on the one hand, and a fearful crop of crudities and disorganizing superstitions on the other. There will be seen floating on the flood many of our most sacred institutions. Old wagon-ruts, long-forgotten cow-tracks, every little hole and corner in the old highways, will be filled to the brim with the rain. You will hardly know the difference between the true springs and the flowing mud-pools visible on every side. Many noble minds will stumble as they undertake to ford the new streams which will come up to their very door-sills, if not into their sacred and established habitations. Perhaps lives may be lost; perhaps homes may be broken up; perhaps fortunes may be sacrificed; for who ever heard of a great flood, a storm of much power, or an earthquake, that did not do one, or two, or *all* of these deplorable things? Spiritualism is, indeed, all and everything which its worst enemies or best friends ever said of it;—a great rain from heaven, a storm of violence, a power unto salvation, a destroyer and a builder too—each, and all, and everything good, bad, and indifferent; for which every one, nevertheless, should be thankful, as eventually all will be when the evil subsides, when the severe rain is over, and the clouds dispersed—when even the blind will see with new eyes, the lame walk, and the mourners of the world be made to rejoice with joy unspeakable.

"Of course, my kind brother, you know that I look upon 'wisdom' organized into our daily lives, and 'love' inspiring every heart, as the only true heaven appointed saviour of mankind. And all spiritual growth and intellectual advancement in the goodnesses and graces of this redeemer I call an application of the Harmonial Philosophy. But I find, as most likely you do, that it is as hard to get the Spiritualists to become Harmonial Philosophers as to induce ardent Bible-believers to daily practice the grand essentials which dwell in the warm heart of Christianity."

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It is not long since the writer was in conversation with a very celebrated and popular minister of the modern Church, who has for years fulfilled a fruitful ministry in New England. He was speaking of modern Spiritualism as one of the most dangerous forms of error—as an unac-



countable infatuation. The idea was expressed by a person present that it was after all true that the spirits of the departed friends were in reality watching over our course and interested in our affairs in this world.

The clergyman, who has a fair right, by reason of his standing and influence to represent the New England pulpit, met that idea by a prompt denial. "A pleasing sentimental dream," he said, "very apt to mislead, and for which there is no scriptural and rational foundation." We have shown in our last article what the very earliest Christians were in the habit of thinking with regard to the unbroken sympathy between the living and those called dead, and how the Church by very significant and solemn acts pronounced them to be not only alive, but alive in a fuller, higher, and more joyful sense than those on earth.

We may remember that among the primitive Christians the celebration of the Lord's Supper was not as in our modern times a rare and unfrequent occurrence, coming at intervals of two, three, and even six months, but that it occurred every Sunday, and on many of the solemn events of life, as funerals and marriages, and that one part of the celebration always consisted in recognizing by a solemn prayer the unbroken unity of the saints below and the saints in heaven. We may remember, too, that it was a belief among them that angels were invisibly present, witnessing and uniting with the eucharistic memorial—a belief of which we still have the expression in that solemn portion of the Episcopal communion service which says, "Wherefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy Holy Name."

This part of the eucharistic service was held by the first Christians to be the sacred and mysterious point of confluence when the souls of saints on earth and the blessed in heaven united. So says Saint Chrysostom :

"The seraphim above sing the holy Trisagion hymn ; the holy congregation of men on earth send up the same ; the general assembly of celestial and earthly creatures join together ; there is one thanksgiving, one exultation ; one choir of men and angels rejoicing together."

And in another place he says :

"The martyrs are now rejoicing in concert, partaking of the mystical songs of the heavenly choir. For if while they were in the body whenever they communicated in the sacred mysteries they made part of the choir, singing with the cherubim, ' holy, holy, holy,' as ye all that are initiated in the holy mysteries know ; much more now, being joined with those whose partners they were in the earthly choir, they do with greater freedom partake of those solemn glorifications of God above."

The continued identity, interest and unbroken oneness of the departed with the remaining was a topic frequently insisted on among early Christian ministers—it was one reason of the rapid spread of Christianity. Converts flocked in clouds to the ranks of a people who professed to have vanquished death—in whose inclosure love was forever safe, and who by so many sacred and solemn acts of recognition consoled the be-

reaved heart with this thought, that their beloved, though unseen, was still living and loving—still watching, waiting, and caring for them.

Modern rationalistic religion says: "We do not know anything about them—God has taken them: of them and their estate we know nothing: whether they remember us, whether they know what we are doing, whether they care for us, whether we shall ever see them again to know them, are all questions veiled in inscrutable mystery. We must give our friends up wholly and take refuge in God."

But St. Augustine, speaking on the same subject, says:

"Therefore, if we wish to hold communion with the saints in eternal life we must think much of imitating them. They ought to recognize in us something of their virtues, that they may better offer their supplications to God for us. These [virtues] are the foot-prints which the blessed returning to their country have left, that we shall follow their path to joy. Why should we not hasten and run after them that we too may see our fatherland? There a great crowd of dear ones are awaiting us, of parents, brethren, children, a multitudinous host are longing for us—now secure of their own safety, and anxious only for our salvation."

Now let us take the case of some poor, widowed mother, from whose heart has been torn an only son—pious, brave, and beautiful—her friend, her pride, her earthly hope—struck down suddenly as by a lightning stroke. The physical shock is terrible—the cessation of communion, if the habits of intercourse and care, if the habit, so sweet to the Christian, of paying for that son, must all cease. We can see now what the primitive Church would have said to such a mother: "Thy son is *not* dead. To the Christian there is no death—follow his footsteps, imitate his prayerfulness and watchfulness, and that he may the better pray for thee, keep close in the great communion of saints." Every Sabbath would bring to her the eucharistic feast, when the Church on earth and the Church in heaven held their reunion, where "with angels and arch-angels, and all the company of heaven," they join their praises! and she might feel herself drawing near to her blessed one in glory. How consoling—how comforting such Church fellowship!

A mother under such circumstances would feel no temptation to resort to doubtful, perplexing sources, to glean here and there fragments of that consolation which the Church was ordained to give. In every act of life the primitive Church recognized that the doors of heaven were open through her ordinances and the communion of love with the departed blest unbroken.

It has been our lot to know the secret history of many who are not outwardly or professedly Spiritualists—persons of sober and serious habits of thought, of great self-culture and self-restraint, to whom it happened after the death of a friend to meet accidentally and without any seeking or expecting on their part with spiritualistic phenomena of a very marked type. These are histories that never will be unveiled to the judgment of a scoffing and unsympathetic world; that in the very na-

ture of the case must forever remain secret ; yet they have brought to hearts bereaved and mourning that very consolation which the Christian Church ought to have afforded them, and which the primitive Church so amply provided.

In conversation with such, we have often listened to remarks like this : " I do not seek these things—I do not search out mediums nor attend spiritual circles. I have attained all I wish to know, and am quite indifferent now whether I see another manifestation." " And what," we inquired, " is this something that you have attained ?" " Oh, I feel perfectly certain that my friend is not dead—but alive, unchanged, in a region of joy and blessedness, expecting me, and praying for me, and often ministering to me."

Compare this with the language of St. Augustine, and we shall see that it is simply a return to the stand-point of the primitive Church.

Among the open and professed Spiritualists are some men and women of pure and earnest natures, and seriously anxious to do good, and who ought to be distinguished from the charlatans who have gone into it merely from motives of profit and self-interest. Now it is to be remarked that this higher class of spiritualists, with one voice, declare that the subject of spiritual communication is embarrassed with formidable difficulties. They admit that lying spirits often frequent the circle, that they are powerful to deceive, and that the means of distinguishing between the wiles of evil spirits and the communications of good ones are very obscure.

This, then, is the prospect. The pastures of the Church have been suffered to become bare and barren of one species of food which the sheep crave and sicken for the want of. They break out of the inclosure and rush, unguided, searching for it among poisonous plants, which closely resemble it, but whose taste is deadly.

Those remarkable phenomena which affect belief upon this subject are not confined to paid mediums and spiritual circles, so called. They sometimes come of themselves to persons neither believing in them, looking for them, nor seeking them. Thus coming they can not but powerfully and tenderly move the soul. A person in the desolation of bereavement, visited with such experiences, is in a condition which calls for the tenderest sympathy and most careful guidance. Yet how little of this is there to be found ! The attempt to unvail their history draws upon them, perhaps, only cold ridicule and a scarcely suppressed doubt of their veracity. They are repelled from making confidence where they ought to find the wisest guidance, and are drawn by an invisible sympathy into labyrinths of deception and error—and finally, perhaps, relapse into a colder skepticism than before. That such experiences are becoming common in our days, is a fact that ought to rouse true Christians to consideration, and to searching the word of God to find the real boundaries and the true and safe paths.

We have stated in the last article, and in this, what the belief and the customs of the primitive Christians were in respect to the departed. We are aware that it does not follow, of course, that a custom is to be adopted in our times because the first Christians preached and taught it. A man does not become like his ancestors by dressing up in their old clothes—but by acting in their *spirit*. It is quite possible to wear such robes and practice such ceremonies as the early Christians did and not to be in the least like them. Therefore let us not be held as advocating the practice of administering the eucharist at funerals, and of praying for the dead in the eucharistic service, because it was done in the first three centuries. But we do hold to a return to the *spirit* which caused these customs. We hold to *that belief* in the unbroken unity possible between those who have passed to the higher life than this. We hold to that vivid faith in things unseen which was the strength of primitive Christians. The first Christians *believed* what they said they did—we do not. The unseen spiritual world, its angels and archangels, its saints and martyrs, its purity and its joys, were ever before them, and that is why they were such a mighty force in the world. St. Augustine says that it was the vision of the saints gone before that inspired them with courage and contempt of death—and it is true.

In another paper we shall endeavor to show how far these beliefs of the primitive Church correspond with the Holy Scripture,