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THE "MINISTRY OF ANGELS" REALIZED.

A

LETTER

TO THE

Edwards Congregational Church,

BOSTON.

BY TWO MEMBERS OF THAT CHURCH.

"Because thou hast made the LORD thy habitation, . . . He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."—PSALM 91: 9, 11.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"—HEB. 1: 14.

"He saw in a vision, evidently, . . an angel of God coming to him."—ACTS 10: 3.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:
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1853.

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A. E. & Sarah J. Newton

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Introductory Note.—This pamphlet is not given to the public as a new revelation from heaven, challenging the attention and belief of mankind; nor yet as a theological or scientific treatise, inviting the criticism of scholars and divines; but it is simply a fraternal letter, called forth in the discharge of what has appeared to be a Christian duty, resulting from personal exigences (unusual, though they may be) in the private life and experience of two humble members of a Christian church. It has been thought proper by them to put it in print,—first, that each of their fellow-members in the church may have the opportunity of a more careful acquaintance with its contents than would otherwise be practicable; secondly, to gratify the desires of numerous friends who, having known somewhat of the matters therein referred to, have solicited copies; and lastly, to afford to any others who may wish to learn of "the wonderful works of God," which are transpiring in this "latter day," the benefit of the experience and conclusions which are therein set forth. This letter has been prepared necessarily with much haste, and in such fragments of time as could be secluded in the midst of most pressing and laborious occupations; but imperfect as it is, the offering is gratefully laid upon the altar of Progressive Truth. The result is left in the hands of Him who has sometimes seen fit to choose "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty."

A few words of explanation will show the occasion and appositeness of the title—"The 'Ministry of Angels' Realized"—which has been prefixed to this Letter. A short time previous to the writing of it, the Rev. Mr. Pond, Pastor of the Edwards Church, in the ordinary course of his duties, and without any suggestion from the writers, (but very much to their surprise as well as gratification,) preached a discourse from Hebrews 1: 14, in which he presented in a very clear and interesting light the common doctrine of the "Ministry of Angels," as theoretically held by the Christian world—going so far, even, as to advocate with much force the belief that our departed friends become, in the spirit-world, angels or messengers of God, to minister unto us. With him, however, it appeared to be a merely speculative conviction, resting chiefly on evidences furnished to the world eighteen hundred years ago. The authors of this letter simply claim to have realized, in most joyful experience, the *truth* of what was thus taught, in *theory*, by their "regularly constituted" and *orthodox* spiritual guide.

Boston, May, 1853.

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LETTER.

To the Members of the Edwards Congregational Church, Boston

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The undersigned are induced to intrude themselves upon your attention in this extraordinary manner, in consequence of a series of most extraordinary events and experiences, to which, in the providence of God, they have recently been called, and which, they conceive, lay upon them the burden of an unusual duty.

Our 'manner of life' from the time when we became connected with you in Church relationship, is known to you all,—to some of you it is known for a much longer period,—'that after the most straitest sect of our religion we have lived' Orthodox Congregationalists. When we sought to be received into your fellowship, it was from the sincere desire, as expressed at the time, to render ourselves more useful in the kingdom of Christ, and thus to attain higher degrees of advancement in spiritual life; though we wish not to be understood as claiming any special purity of motive in this respect. When we assented to your creed, it was with sincerity and cordiality, believing it to embrace a very accurate epitome of the Christian Faith, according to the light we then had. And we had little expectation, at that time, that any further light would dawn upon us or the world, while we should remain in the body.

But we feel bound to make known to you, that it has pleased the Father of Lights, 'from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift,' within the past few months, to shed a new and glorious light upon our pathway, and to open our eyes to clearer and higher perceptions of His truth, His wisdom, and His wonder-working providence. This has been done in a manner most unexpected to us, and, in latter times, most extraordinary; but it has been attended with such convincing and overwhelming proofs, as to leave, in our minds, after a most deliberate and searching investigation, no possible question as to its heavenly origin. As we have freely received, we feel bound freely to give; and we cannot be 'disobedient to the heavenly vision,' without rejecting the most positive convictions of truth ever formed in our minds, and resisting the clearest obligations of duty ever felt by our consciences.

Aware of the sensitiveness usually felt in our denomination,

respecting any variation from the commonly received standards of faith, and holding no truths which we desire to conceal, and none in which you are not equally concerned with ourselves, we have judged it proper, in Christian frankness and confidence, to lay before you a concise and truthful statement of the position in which we now find ourselves, and of the wonderful means through which we have been brought to it. Such a statement we feel to be due to ourselves, in order that we may not be held responsible for views which we no longer entertain: and also due to you, that you may not be considered as endorsing the orthodoxy of our present convictions, should you fail to be convinced of their truth.

We then invite your candid attention to a brief narrative of observation and experience.

Upwards of two years since, we were induced, by the solicitation of an esteemed and intelligent friend, to witness for ourselves, certain extraordinary phenomena, which he believed were produced by the agency of disembodied spirits — alleging that he had received convincing proofs of the presence and ability to communicate of personal friends who had been long in the spirit-world. We complied with the solicitation, from the conviction that it was neither manly nor Christian to refuse to investigate a subject fraught with consequences of such interest and importance to every human being. 'PROVE ALL THINGS; *hold fast that which is good*,' (1 Thess. 5: 21,) is a maxim sanctioned equally by common sense and Divine authority. There seemed to be nothing absurd or impossible in the supposition, since it was the almost universal sentiment of Christendom, not only that angels are 'ministering spirits' to human beings in the body, (Heb. 1: 14,) — having 'charge over them in all their ways,' (Ps. 91: 11, 12,) and 'encamping round about to deliver them,' (Ps. 34: 7,) — but that our departed friends, also, having become '*as* the angels,' (Matt. 22: 30) are among that 'great cloud of witnesses' who 'encompass us about,' (Heb. 12: 1,) watching over us with undiminished love, and endeavoring to lead us upward toward the realms of purity and bliss. That they should *wish* to make us sensible of their presence and love, that we might more fully realize the benefits of their ministration, seemed extremely probable; and that the means of gratifying this wish might be granted them in this latter day, when ADVANCEMENT seems to be the order of God's providence in every department of human interest, appeared by no means impossible.

The results, however, of this investigation, at that time, were (for reasons then not apparent, but which have since been made plain to us) far from satisfactory. Though we witnessed some striking evidences of invisible intelligent agency, there was nothing by which this agency could be positively identified; and the conclusion seemed most in accordance with our previous opinions, that if any agency beyond that of human beings was concerned, it was that of evil and seducing spirits.

Some months subsequently to this, we were led again to attempt the investigation, under circumstances more favorable to arriving at a satisfactory conclusion. At this time, public attention was beginning to be turned somewhat extensively to the subject, and many were yielding credence to these marvels, as the precursors or attestations of a new dispensation of divine truth. We felt that if these things were from the Spirit of Evil, that fact could and ought to be ascertained and exposed ; and that it did not become those who profess to have had their minds enlightened, and their spiritual perceptions quickened to discern between truth and error, between evil and good, to sit by with folded hands, and not attempt to rescue from this new 'snare of the devil,' those who were being 'taken captive by him at his will.' It must first, however, be proved to *be* a snare of the devil, lest, in our efforts at rescue, we should 'be found even to fight against God' (Acts 5: 39.) This proof could not be obtained without a candid personal examination, and such we resolved to make, as the only basis of a rational conviction.

The results of the first interview were of the most surprising, yea, astounding character. An intelligence, claiming to be the spirit of a venerated parent, who had long since passed within the veil, manifested its presence, and addressed to one of us a communication glowing with parental affection, and breathing the very spirit of the upper realm. This was accompanied by the statement of a number of facts pertaining to his earthly life, none of which, we were fully satisfied, could have been known to any person bodily present, except the inquirer, and some of them unknown even to him. Although the investigation had been approached with minds on the alert, and perceptions sharpened, to detect collusion, imposture, deception, or diabolism in any of its forms, no trace of them could be perceived ; all was conducted with evident frankness and candor, on the part of those concerned ; and no solution of the mystery was then arrived at, and no adequate one has since been offered, which does not recognize the agency of invisible intelligent beings. A trumpet-blast from the clouds could scarcely have been more startling to our prejudices and unbelief, than was that message from the hidden world. For days it seemed as if a voice from heaven was indeed ringing in our astonished ears, and never were our souls more deeply stirred than by that solemn exhortation to 'lead a life of holiness and sobriety on earth,' that we might receive the 'crown of glory' and the Divine benediction when we should enter upon the life to come.

As may be well supposed, the interest awakened by this occurrence, was sufficient to lead to a further investigation. But a truth so novel and startling could not at once be received, however demonstrative and convincing the evidence on which it rested. Nor was it until evidence had accumulated upon evidence, and proof become piled upon proof—not until manifestations of the most marvelous character had been repeatedly witnessed, under a great

variety of circumstances, and notwithstanding the application of every conceivable test,—that we could consent to acknowledge, even to ourselves, a belief in the agency of spiritual beings. That belief, however, in spite of prejudice and skepticism—in spite of the general cry of 'humbug' and 'imposture'—in spite of all attempts of 'scientific men' to explain the marvels on the basis of materialism, (which explanations we found to be in every case wholly inadequate to account for what we witnessed)—that belief became at length forced upon our minds by irresistible evidence.

But the question still pressed upon us, Who were these invisible beings? and what their character and designs? They claimed to be the spirits of departed human beings—some of them insisted that they were our relatives and friends, who had thrown off the mortal tenement, and arisen to a higher form of life—and they furnished most startling and inexplicable proofs of their identity. They professed to be thus manifesting themselves to our outward senses, for the purest and holiest of purposes—to re-awaken long buried affection, and cause the conscious re-union of our hearts with the 'loved and lost', who indeed were not lost, but ever watching around us—to dissipate the clouds of fear, and ignorance, and doubt, which hang over the portals of the tomb—to quicken our faith in the realities of the unseen world, and the glories that there await the earnest seeker for truth and goodness,—and to proclaim the speedy coming on earth of that glorious promised day, when 'the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations,' shall be removed; when 'death shall be swallowed up in victory,' and 'the tears wiped away from all faces.' (Isa. 25: 7, 8.)

Were they what they claimed to be, or were they deceivers? Were they good spirits, or evil? Or were there both good and evil? Some people were ready to decide at once, that, if spirits, they *must be* evil, and therefore wholly to be avoided. But this was a condemnation without a trial. The injunction of the Apostle is,—and it was now seen to have an application before unthought of,—not to reject them altogether, but to '*try* the spirits whether they be of God.' (1 John 4: 1.) This certainly implies that some *are* of God, and some not. And surely, if any dependence could be placed upon the representations of the scriptures on the subject, we are surrounded and watched over by ministers of good as truly as of evil; and why should the former, whose duty it is to have 'charge over us in all our ways,' neglect to interfere, and warn us of, and save us from, the machinations of the latter? To suppose they were not allowed to do so, would be inconsistent with the goodness and the promises of God.

But some will ask at the outset, Is not all converse with spirits forbidden by the Deity? We reply that we know no evidence of such prohibition, except as regards evil or undeveloped spirits, and with such we have no desire for intercourse. If the prohibitions given through Moses, included good as well as evil, then they were transgressed by Moses himself,—for, did he not talk with the 'angel at the bush'? (Acts 7: 30.) And did he not receive the

law 'by the ministration of angels,' (Heb. 2 : 2. Acts 7 : 53,) spending forty days with them in the mount? (Ex. 24 : 18.) It was transgressed also by Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and doubtless all the prophets, for do they not describe their interviews with spiritual beings, sometimes terming them 'men,' and again 'angels of the Lord'?* (1 Sam. 3. Isa. 6. 1 Kings 19 : 5, 7, 11. Eze. 40 : 3. Dan. 8 : 16. 9 : 21. 10 : 5, 16. 12 : 6, 7.) It was transgressed, too, by Christ, at the transfiguration (Luke 9 : 30.), and by the apostles and others in numerous instances. (Acts 1 : 10. 10 : 3. 11 : 12. 12 : 7, 8. 16: 9.) And lastly, John the Revelator wrote the whole book of the Apocalypse, under the direction and inspiration of an 'angel,' who at the end announced himself to be '*one of his brethren the prophets.*' (Rev. 22 : 9.)

It was thus evidently our duty not to condemn or avoid all indiscriminately, but to distinguish between them. Moreover, the rule by which they were to be tried was given, both by the Apostle and by Christ. 'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.' (1 John 4 : 2.) 'By *their fruits* shall ye know them. (Matt. 7 : 20.) Having thus the tests put into our hands, with the all-sufficient promise, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth unto all men liberally, and it shall be given you,' (Jas. 1 : 5.) why should we refrain from applying them?

The most favorable opportunities were offered us for making this investigation; and they were carefully and prayerfully improved. For several successive months did we continue to apply to what was transpiring under our notice, through the mediumship of others, the keenest powers of observation, and the highest exercise of moral perception, which have been granted us — ever seeking aid and light from Him who has said, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.'

At length these intelligences from another sphere began to manifest themselves to us, in a manner most unlooked-for, and diverse from anything we had elsewhere witnessed, in the quietness and seclusion of our own home, and without the intervention of any other person. From small and gentle beginnings, they have gone forward as we were able to bear the increasing light, to give greater and higher and clearer proofs of the reality of their presence, their identity, and their heavenly mission; until, through a period of six or seven months, we have been permitted, as we believe, the almost daily enjoyment of the sweetest and most intimate communion with the spirits of 'just ones made perfect' above.

We cannot undertake to detail to you in this communication the extraordinary scenes which we have passed through, nor to recite the wonderful messages we have listened to, during this period. A volume would be required to present the subject adequately to your minds. Nor will we attempt to describe the mental struggles

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*In some instances they seem to have supposed the LORD himself appeared; but we have New Testament authority for believing that "No man hath seen GOD at any time." (John 1: 18.)

which it has cost us to overcome the barriers of prejudice, and yield our hearts to the truths and convictions which have been irresistibly forced upon us. We can mention only the general features of our experience, with the results to which we have been led.

First, that there are false and wicked spirits seeking in this way to communicate with men, is as fully evident as that there are false and wicked men in this life,—and they are to be judged in the same manner, by their words and works. The fact that the human body may be possessed and controlled by evil spirits, is, to us, no longer a fact of history, but of observation ; and more than once have we been called upon to 'cast out devils* in the name of Christ.' Through the earlier part of our experience, it was a matter of perplexing inquiry, how we might be secure from the annoyances and deceptions practiced upon us by these ill-disposed intelligences. At length, the whole question was solved in a manner so plain, that we wondered it should have caused us any difficulty. We were taught that the great law of attraction, or affinity, holds as universally in the spiritual as in the physical world—that we draw around us spirits like ourselves, those whose motives, feelings, aspirations, are most in affinity with our own ; and that if we would attract only the good, the pure, the exalted, we must ourselves be pure-minded, sincere, devout ; and the channel of communication must also be pure and elevated.

The operations of this law are evident, to an imperfect degree, in the world about us. Who has any fear that the debased and polluted denizens of the haunts of vice, will intrude themselves into our meetings of devotion, and endeavor to instill the poison of their irreligion into our hearts, under the guise of religious discourse? They have no affinity there,—neither are the good attracted to the assemblies of evil men, except for offices of benevolence and pity. We are not then left, as some suppose, wholly at the mercy of the evil-disposed ; but if we 'resist the devil, he will flee from us.'

The following advice, from our invisible attendants, shows the tenor of their instructions on this point ; judge for yourselves, whether it is from above or beneath :

"Meet with us often. Come with confidence. Come with elevated thoughts and purity of purpose. Come with the Lord's Prayer engraved upon your minds and hearts. Come with contrite and devout hearts, and God's declaration, that 'where two or three are met together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them,' shall not be void ; but you then shall hear glad tidings from on high through God's messengers."

Acting in accordance with instructions so proper, and secluding ourselves from all associations tending to an opposite direction, we have found no further reason to suspect that this method of communicating with the invisible world has been wholly usurped by the great adversary of souls. On the contrary,

Secondly, we have the most abundant evidence of the goodness,

* The meaning of this term will be made more apparent hereafter.

purity, the exalted intelligence and the transcendent love of those who claim to be our heaven-appointed guardians. We know not how demonstration could possibly be stronger than it is on these points.

As has already been stated, we have been permitted to hold almost daily converse with them, in the quiet seclusion of our own household, and under circumstances admitting of no possible mistake or delusion. They are by our side, sensibly and often visibly, at morning, noon and evening, and encamp around us and our little ones through the silent hours of night. When we bow in worship around the family altar, they join their worship with ours, 'helping our infirmities' and 'making intercessions for us,' in words full of wondrous meaning and sublime adoration. When we approach the table to partake of God's bounties, they are ever nigh to remind us of the great Giver of all good, to inspire our hearts with thankfulness, and to instruct us in the nature and qualities of the different kinds of food, that we may select only such as is 'convenient for us.' (And we may here remark that the useful, practical and truly scientific information they have imparted to us on subjects connected with dietetics and the general care of the health of our bodies, has of itself been sufficient to demonstrate beyond all cavil their superior insight into the laws of our being, and their benevolent intentions. We do not profess, however, to have acted upon their instructions fully as yet, for so far removed are the habits of artificial life from the simplicity of nature that an immediate return seems impracticable in the present state of society. Consequently we have not yet experienced the full benefits they would confer, but their teachings have commended themselves to our highest perceptions of what is desirable and salutary.)

When we have opened the ancient record of God's revelations to man, then they have specially delighted to stand by and lend us their aid in understanding the precious volume, pointing out new beauties and hidden glories in its pages. Most literally have they opened our eyes 'to behold wondrous things' out of that book. Undiscovered truths are made to beam forth from many an obscure and doubtful line, familiar words have received new meanings, and many things in 'the ways of God to man' which have heretofore seemed dark, mysterious, and full of gloom, now stand vindicated of all seeming harshness, and the tender parental love of our Heavenly Father is made to shine forth in resplendent beams upon all His offspring, both from His word and His works. When we have met with you in the public assemblies of the Lord's Day, they have also been about us, making manifestations of their supreme delight in the higher acts of praise and adoration, impressing us with clearer perceptions of heavenly truth, and teaching us to discern between that which God has revealed and that which man in his blindness and ignorance has perverted or invented. Yea, startling as it may seem to you, throngs of angels, bright as those whose music was heard o'er

Bethlehem's plains, were on one occasion of special interest seen within the walls of our humble temple, hovering over each one of you, and endeavoring to breathe into your souls 'glad tidings of great joy.' You have often unconsciously recognized their presence, and addressed them in your songs of praise, invoking them to join your worship.

"Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;"*

"Ye holy throng of angels bright,
In worlds of light, begin the song;"†

"Your voices raise, ye cherubim
And seraphim, to sing His praise;"‡

"Oh ye angels, hovering round us,
Waiting spirits, speed your way;"§

"A cloud of witnesses around
Hold thee in full survey;"¶

and many, many more like invocations and recognitions, to be found on almost every page of your devotional hymns—how often have they been repeated by your lips, though perhaps with scarce a thought they had a meaning, much less a realization that the bright beings addressed were around you and listening to your words. If it be not so, however, you will at once perceive the vainness and absurdity of thus calling upon them.

Not only on such occasions, but in all the common walks, trials, and vicissitudes of life, whenever we feel the need of assistance, strength and light from above, we find them at hand, bringing to us, from the great Source of Good, those supplies of grace and wisdom which we require—ever counseling us, however, not to ask of them, or to rely upon their power and wisdom, but upon Him whose ministers they are, and whose will they perform. When care and perplexity, as regards the affairs of this life, have borne upon us, they have been ever ready with words of counsel and of cheer—never, however, so directing us as to supersede the use of our own faculties, but always in such a manner as to bring out the highest exercise of our individual judgment and reason. When all manner of evil has been spoken against us falsely by former friends, because we have yielded our convictions to irresistible evidences of this unpopular belief, they have been near to whisper words of consolation and hope that have made us truly 'blessed,' and we have been permitted to realize, as did the prophet's servant, whose eyes the Lord opened, (2 Kings 6: 16,17) that 'they that be for us are more than they that be against us.' And in the quiet hours of retirement and contemplation, when we have sought to know more of ourselves and our relations to the universe around us, to solve the great problems of life, and to comprehend more of His ways who 'works all things after the counsel of His own will,' then also have we found ourselves under the guidance and teaching of instructors whose knowledge extends

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* Doxology. † Ch. Psalmody, Psalm 148, 5th Part.
‡ Ch. Psal., Ps.148, 4th Pt. § Do., Hymn 234. ¶ Do., Hymn 379.

beyond our highest previous conceptions; whose wisdom, compared with the low-born philosophy of earth, is as the noon-day sun to the flickering taper; and whose sole design appears to be to display before us the wondrous wisdom, power, and perfections of the Great Author of Minds, that we may see Him as they see—adore Him as they adore—and love Him as they love.

One characteristic of their teachings has been, an absence of all dogmatism, or attempt to thrust upon us strange doctrines and fantastic notions, on the mere authority of their word. On the contrary, they have insisted that we submit all their instructions to the test of our own powers, as enlightened by the Word and the Spirit of God—charging us to receive nothing until it should commend itself to our highest intellectual and moral perceptions as both true and good. And no single principle has been advanced, to our present recollection, through months of intimate intercourse, either in physical, mental, moral or theological science, which has not carried conviction upon its very face to all whose hearts were open to its appreciation. Thus they 'teach as those having authority,'—the authority of self-evident truth,—'and not as the scribes.' (Matt. 7: 29.)

In short, picture to yourselves your highest conception of what it would be to you to walk day by day in conscious intercourse with beings of a higher sphere—to listen to their words of love, their songs of praise, their teachings of wisdom, purity and heavenly truth, their descriptions of the glories of that brighter world in which they dwell,—and to feel the hallowing, elevating, purifying influence of the realized presence of such pure beings shed over all your thoughts and acts—and then you may have some idea of what it has been given us to enjoy and to realize in this new dispensation of God's grace. It is readily confessed that we have been dull scholars, and 'slow of heart to believe,' else our profiting under such teachers would have become more apparent to all men—but this surely is from no fault on their part, nor is it an uncommon one on the part of humanity. We may say, however, and we trust it will not be deemed an unseemly boasting in us, that if we ever experienced the love of God and of man shed abroad in our hearts, that love has been quickened, purified, intensified—if we ever exercised faith, that faith has been immeasurably strengthened, and rendered a *vital principle* instead of a mere speculative probability—if we ever yearned for purity of heart and holiness of life, those yearnings have been stimulated and increased—and if we ever have received aid in overcoming 'the world, the flesh and the devil,' such aid has been consciously imparted to us under these angelic ministrations. Besides all this, the miraculous gifts bestowed in attestation of the divine authority of the mission of Christ, have also been granted, to prove the heavenly origin of this new revelation. The casting out of undeveloped demons; the healing of the sick, the lame, the blind, either by instantaneous cure or by more gradual recovery under the use of means prescribed by superior direction; the use

of unknown tongues, the foretelling of future events, the power of discerning or perceiving spirits—all these have been exhibited in numerous instances, some under our own observation, in our own family, and even through our own instrumentality—and others in well-attested cases, the evidence of which is before the public.

With these frank and truthful statements of our experiences before you, we leave it to yourselves to decide whether *such* influences are from above or from beneath—whether such beings are angels of purity, or seducing spirits, seeking our destruction. If these things be *evil*, well may we ask, 'who will show us any *good?*' or teach us to distinguish between good and evil? If such are the 'workings of Satan,' as many would have us believe, then verily hath Satan himself become 'transformed into an angel of light'—a teacher of purity and of piety—a friend of God and of man! and it is most sincerely to be hoped that all his adherents, on earth or elsewhere, may speedily undergo a like transformation!

There were those in our Savior's time, who, notwithstanding his holy teachings, and his heavenly purity, and the benevolence of his miracles, attributed all to the agency of 'Beelzebub the prince of devils,' (Matt. 12 : 24) merely because he conformed not in all things to the standard 'orthodoxy' of the day; and it is no less 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 12 : 31) to ascribe the same manifestations of Divine power and goodness, in our day, to the same evil source—a guilt which we should shudder to incur. 'By their fruits shall ye know them.' And if the 'finger of God' is manifest in these things, then, truly, the 'kingdom of God is come unto' *us*. (Matt. 12 : 28.)

But we have as yet said nothing as to the manner in which these celestial visitants have manifested their presence, and communicated with us. At first, the only token of unseen agency was the production of slight sounds, apparently upon material objects; and these sounds, by indicating letters of the alphabet as pointed out, were made to spell words and sentences. This has given rise to the term 'spirit-rappings.' In a short time, movements were made of physical substances, as articles of furniture, &c., often with great force. The presence of some person, believed to possess a certain peculiarity of physical constitution, was found to be necessary for the production of these manifestations. Of course, we satisfied ourselves at the outset that these things were produced by no human contrivance, but by some power operating without visible means; and, that it was an intelligent power, and not a blind force, was demonstrated by its intelligent results. *How* spirits can thus operate upon matter, we will undertake to explain when he who questions their ability to do so, will explain *how* the angels rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher, (Matt. 28 : 2,) or *how* his own mind can act upon the matter of his physical body, or *how* the Omnipotent Mind can operate upon, set in motion and control the universe of matter. That it *is* done, in all these cases, is sufficient proof that it *can be* done.

As these manifestations have advanced, however, higher and more perfect methods of communication have been employed. The hand of some person who possesses the proper physical and mental requisites, is taken under control by an intelligent power foreign to the possessor of it, and thus writing is performed—thoughts, sentiments and statements flow from the pen—of which the person acting as instrument often has no knowledge or conception till his astonished eyes behold them traced on the paper before him. Other individuals, of differing physical and mental conditions, are more easily employed in other ways. Some, on abstracting their minds, and ceasing their own mental operations, find an influence gently controlling their organs of speech, and as they yield to its power, words of wonder and thoughts of angelic beauty will drop from their lips. Others still, with yet varying characteristics, will close their eyes to outward scenes, when their interior vision will be opened, and, like Jacob at Bethel, like Stephen at the stoning, the prophets in their visions, and like many persons in the early Christian church, they will 'see heaven opened,' 'the angels of God ascending and descending,' listen to the converse of the celestial visitants and the music of their golden harps, and drink in the melodies of the upper spheres. They thus become instruments or '*mediums*' of communication between the unseen and the less favored around them. And there are yet others, who without any outward exhibition or consciousness of exterior influence, will have their perceptions quickened, and their minds opened to an unusual influx of suggestions, thoughts and convictions, and thus be enabled to speak forth words of wisdom and instruction to all who hear. To be a 'medium,' then, you will perceive, is no cause of reproach or disgrace; it is only to be what prophets, seers, and apostles have been—what Christ himself was—channels through which Divine light and goodness can be poured into the minds of men.

The above-described are all varying manifestations of spiritual influence or inspiration—'diversities of gifts from the same spirit'—producing exhibitions of the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, of prophecy, of discerning of spirits, of working miracles, and of healing the sick—precisely identical with those enjoyed in the primitive days of the Christian church, (1 Cor. 13) and concerning which there is no hint that they were designed for that age alone. They have been lost only as the primitive faith and purity of the church have been lost.

There may be those who will question the power of disembodied spirits thus to control the hands, the brain, and the organs of speech, of living persons; but those who believe in *demoniacal* possession, of which so many cases are stated in the New Testament, cannot consistently do so. If spirits of a low character possess this power, why should not the more exalted use it also for worthy purposes? And those who are at all acquainted with the phenomena of late years developed under the names of Mesmerism, Pathetism, Biology, and the rest, must be familiar with

the fact that minds *in the body* can and often do exercise the same power of control over the organisms of impressible persons. Have not minds *out of the body*, and possessed of a more intimate knowledge of the relations of body and spirit, at least equal abilities?

But some to whom this whole subject is new, will ask, Is it not possible that after all you may be mistaken or deceived?—that this is all the creation of a diseased imagination, or a 'strong delusion' from the adversary of good? It might be sufficient to ask in reply, which is the more probable, that we should be mistaken or deluded, after so elaborate an investigation, and so full an experience, or that those who have not opened their eyes to the light should be ignorant of the realities that surround them? Who is best qualified to testify of the beauties and glories of the natural world—of 'the sun shining in his strength,' and of the earth robed in loveliness —he who has shut himself up in a dungeon, and bandaged his eyes to prevent the admission of a single ray of light, or he who walks abroad and enjoys the full exercise of his senses? 'We speak that we *do know*, and testify that we *have seen*,' and why should you not receive the witness of those in whose integrity and veracity you would confide on all other subjects, as well as the testimony of persons who lived eighteen hundred years ago, and of whom you know and can know nothing personally? Were we alone in these convictions, we might speak with less positiveness; but there are hundreds of honest, upright, pure-minded people in this city, thousands in the State, and hundreds of thousands in this favored land, who within the past few months have passed through similar experiences, have been compelled to the same conclusions, and now rejoice in the same glorious light. Or, were these convictions merely speculative opinions, having their origin in our own minds, it would become us to announce them with less emphasis and assurance. But 'our faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.' These revelations are not the speculations of a conceited philosophy, but have come attested by 'demonstrations of the spirit and of power,' fully as convincing, for aught that we can see, as any that were ever granted to man.

We have endeavored to be fully informed in regard to all tatempts made to explain these things on different grounds than those we have indicated. So far as we are aware, there are but three individuals who have written with any effect against the view we have been compelled to adopt. These are Dr. Rogers, of this city, in his late elaborate work entitled the 'Philosophy of Mysterious Agents;' Dr. Richmond, of Ohio, in a recent discussion with S. B. Brittan, published in the 'Spiritual Telegraph;' and Rev. Chas. Beecher, of Newark, in his report before the Congregational Association of New York and Brooklyn.

The first, Dr. Rogers, would refer the whole phenomena, (or rather such facts as he has investigated and is willing to admit—for it is doubtful if the higher developments to which we have referred have come under his notice) to human and mundane causes, utter-

ly denying the agency of disembodied spirits in any degree. He would have us attribute all these exhibitions of angelic love, of heavenly wisdom, of profound and far-reaching intellect,—all these creations of poetic beauty—all these developments of the Great Father's wisdom and power and love,—all these incitements to purity, holiness and progress—to *what* do you imagine?—*To the mere unconscious automatic action of the brain* of the person through whom they are given!—the mere *play* of some of the cerebral organs, under the stimulus perhaps of a physical irritant, but without direct aid or control of mind, either in or out of the body! Even the foretelling of future events, with the greatest accuracy and precision, and the speaking in unknown tongues, he disposes of in the same extraordinary manner; while other phenomena are referred to other equally inadequate causes. Of such philosophy we need only remark here, that it but the more thoroughly mystifies what it attempts to explain, and assumes vastly more incredible miracles than those it professes to elucidate. And more than this, if the Dr.'s philosophy does account, by merely human and mundane causes, for the phenomena we have witnessed and experienced, it does the same for all similar manifestations in all past days—*for it is utterly absurd to suppose that what is now done by merely human and earthly agencies, was eighteen hundred years ago performed by angelic interposition or Divine power.* Thus has this writer, in order to overthrow the claims of the new dispensation, dug out what is esteemed the very corner-stone of the Christian faith, and utterly demolished its supposed miraculous foundation.—And in this work, too, he has had the sanction and endorsement of many, if not most, of our religious journals, not to say of our pulpits also! Thus is the issue distinctly presented, between spiritualism and the ministry of angels, on the one hand, and skepticism, materialism, if not downright atheism on the other, and strange to say, the vast majority of our religious teachers seem to prefer the philosophy which leads to the latter!

Dr. Richmond has undertaken to dispose of these manifestations of spirit-agency on substantially the same grounds as Dr. Rogers. They are all, in his view, the results of the operation of mental and physical forces hitherto unknown or little understood. But this writer has the consistency and the courage boldly to avow, that all the manifestations of former times, including those recorded in the Bible, and on which its Divine authority is usually based, were produced by the same causes. Accordingly he considers Jesus Christ to have been a mere *magician*, and that he differed from other magicians only in this, that he 'conceived the sublime and benevolent idea of regenerating the entire race by wielding them through this channel,' though 'whether he clearly discerned the philosophy of his system is doubtful.' He believes that Christ instructed his apostles in the same magic arts he himself practiced, and they in turn transmitted them to others, all the while pretending them to be 'gifts of the spirit!' He asserts that the appearances of angels or spirits to the apostles and others were mere mental reflections of

images existing in their own minds, and their supposed words the results of magnetic mental impression! (Sp. Telegraph, Mar. 5.)

> "O star-eyed Science! hast thou wandered there,
> To waft us back the message of despair?"

Behold then the inevitable results of a denial of modern spiritual manifestations!—the unavoidable conclusions of modern materialism!—And if Drs. Rogers and Richmond, with all their science, research, acuteness and ingenuity, can furnish only such a solution of these mysteries, aside from the confession of spirit-agency, who next will venture upon the task?

The remaining alternative is that presented in the Review of Rev. Mr. Beecher, as the result of his investigations of these phenomena. He concedes that the manifestations are not the product of mere juggle or imposture—that they do not originate in the action of electricity, magnetism, or any other physical force—that they are not caused by the unconscious or involuntary mental action of persons in the body—but that they *are really caused by the spirits of departed human beings*. He concludes that the movement 'is essentially one with the *demonic* possession whereof the Gospels often speak—that is, the control and use of the bodily organs of the living, by human spirits, INCORRECTLY *termed* "*devils*," in our English version of the scriptures.'

This position, remarkable as it is, is unquestionably correct as regards a great portion of the manifestations which have been made in various parts of the country; and you will not fail to notice certain important results which must inevitably follow from it—namely, that the spirits of the departed, bad as well as good, instead of being shut away in some distant corner of the universe, as many imagine, *are still about us*, capable of influencing us, and communicating with us; while the 'devils,' which have been so long the bugbears of the Christian world, and especially of those who have undertaken to investigate this subject, are suddenly transformed, as by a touch of Ithuriel's spear, into their true characters, namely, the *departed spirits of men, some of whom are ignorant and wicked!* And as is natural to suppose, spirits of the latter class manifest the same ignorance, the same love of folly and deception, and the same aversion to good, that characterize beings of similar grades in this life.

The conclusion, however, of the Rev. gentleman, that *all* who communicate are of this character, is somewhat doubtfully stated, and still more doubtfully maintained. He admits that the claims of some of them to a heavenly mission, as attested by miracles of benevolence and doctrines of wisdom, are 'forcibly wielded, with ingenuity, candor, popular adaptation, and success,' and urges that they be met with 'kindly courtesy,' 'respect and Christian consideration;' while the only arguments with which he opposes these claims, seem to be addressed, like those of the Jewish doctors of old, to the *prejudices* of men. 'Search and look; for out of GALILEE ariseth no prophet.' (Jn. 7: 52.) His evidences that they are

all 'evil,' and 'under the guidance of some one mind of fathomless ability, and fathomless guile,' rest not on any exhibitions of intrinsic immorality or obvious impiety, but simply on the assumptions that the popular 'orthodox' interpretation of certain speculative Christian doctrines is the only true interpretation; and that the Bible, as thus interpreted, forms an immutable standard of Divine Authority. He has not one word to show wherein the '*authority*' of communications given to men in ages gone by,—some of which have been compiled and included in the volume called the Bible,—is in any respect superior to that of revelations given in our own day, through precisely the same agencies, attested by similar outward miracles, and bearing to the reason and the conscience of men vastly higher internal evidence of Divine wisdom and goodness.

For ourselves, therefore, we feel obliged to say that we cannot look back upon the pure and heavenly instructions we have received, and declare, 'These are the words of him that hath a devil,' without incurring the guilt of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. We cannot believe them 'evil,' without doing violence to our clearest perceptions of the distinction between good and evil—without utterly negativing the voice of reason and of conscience—without reversing and falsifying the word of Christ, 'a corrupt tree CANNOT bring forth good fruit'—without regarding God as utterly faithless to His promises, and believing that when we ask bread He will give a stone; when we ask a fish He will give a scorpion; when we ask truth He will give a LIE; when we ask wisdom, He will send only folly and delusion—without, in fact, believing that the Almighty has abandoned man to the power of the adversary, and that evil alone reigns omnipotent on earth.

We have spoken strongly—but it is from strong convictions, founded on the strongest of evidences.

Can any one ask, after such a presentation of this subject, (as many have asked,) 'Of what use is this spiritual intercourse, even though real?' If this question comes from those who have already learned all they expect or wish to know, or, in their view, all there is to be known, of God's truth or His universe, it is useless to answer it—for the force of an answer would fail to be appreciated, and 'casting pearls before swine' is an *unprofitable* employment for all concerned. But those who are yet capable of learning something more, who have 'become as little children' in the kingdom of Christ, who do not feel themselves to have yet arrived at the summit of all human attainments, and who expect to advance and expand as they drink in the unfolding wonders of a universe of truth, beauty and love, through the countless years of eternity—such will perceive at once the advantages to be derived from communion with those who have passed on to a higher life. We esteem it the greatest of privileges to be permitted to associate intimately with the wise and good, the exalted and the learned, of earth—to drink in instruction from their lips, and goodness from their hearts. And is it not a privilege vastly more to be coveted, to have free converse with those minds who have arisen to a broader field of vision, who drink from

a purer fount of wisdom, and who have attained a higher rank of goodness than is known to earth? Surely those who are engaged in the study of the scriptures—who find therein 'things hard to be understood,' and feel the need of 'some man to guide' them as they read (Acts 8: 30, 31,)—who have made use of all human aids within their reach only to find often amid the conflicting opinions of men still increasing doubt and perplexity—surely such should hail the approach of teachers who can 'speak what they know and testify what they have seen,' with joy and gratitude unspeakable.

Moreover, is it of no use to have answered, beyond all cavil or doubt, that world-old query of the human soul, 'If a man die, shall he live again?' In these evidences of spiritual existence we have a demonstration of the reality of a future life, which many even of the sternest and boldest rejectors of scripture authority have not been able to gainsay or resist.

And more than all, is it not of some value to all of us to find a relief to that longing of the spirit toward the 'loved and lost'—that yearning of the affections to know *where* and *how* exist those dear ones who have been snatched from our view, and borne beyond our ken!

"The dead! the much-loved dead!
Who doth not yearn to know
The secret of their dwelling-place,
And to what land they go?
What heart but asks, with ceaseless tone
For some sure knowledge of its own?"

To those who have been enabled to receive full conviction of the reality of intercourse with the departed, these heart-yearnings have been fully and gloriously answered. Death to them is truly 'swallowed up in victory!' A 'new heaven' is over them, and a 'new earth' beneath their feet; 'all tears are wiped from their eyes,' and they realize the fulfilment of that promise, 'THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH, neither sorrow nor crying; for the former things are passed away.' (Rev. 21: 4.)

You may well suppose that in this course of experience and instruction which has been described to you, we have learned some truths which we did not know before, and that we have been compelled to *un*learn some things which we had once received as truths. Nor should it surprise you, or at least such of you as have been in the habit of investigating for yourselves the grounds of your belief, if we have found ourselves unable to make the broader and higher views which have been presented to our convictions, in all respects harmonize with the systems of religious philosophy and the formularies of faith which men have constructed. For who that has ventured to *think*, has not felt that there were points in the popular theological systems, that, to say the least, *need* confirmation? So broad a field, however, has been opened before us by these instructions—stretching into the domain of physical and mental, as well as moral and spiritual science—that we can

convey to you in this communication no adequate idea of their general import. We can only, in accordance with the design frankly stated at the commencement of this letter, touch upon some points wherein our present convictions may be thought to run counter to the generally received standards of orthodoxy, and in maintaining which we desire not to take any unfair advantage of our supposed good standing with you.

And, first, we would say, that the universe now appears to us to be governed under the great eternal law of PROGRESSION—that throughout all forms of matter, and all grades of life, and all orders of created intelligences, there is an unceasing progress of DEVELOPMENT—ADVANCEMENT from low to high, from high to higher and still higher gradations of quality, condition, capacity and enjoyment—in never-ceasing approximation towards the boundless perfections, the glory inconceivable, and the joy unutterable of the Great Original. 'For OF Him, and THROUGH Him, and TO Him are ALL THINGS—to whom be glory forever.' (Rom. 11 : 36.)

Passing by the countless and varied illustrations of this law presented in all the forms of matter and of life around and below us, we will speak only of its bearings upon man as an individual and as a race.

That man as a race has been placed under the operation of this law, is evident from all we know of his past history and present condition. We are all aware that this age of enlightenment, of science, of civilization, of the useful arts, and of the comparative reign of reason, benevolence and justice, has been reached only by successive steps from the lowest conditions of barbarism, ignorance and savageness. And even those individuals who in their times have stood in some respects preëminent over their fellows, are now seen to have been on the whole greatly below our highest idea of human perfection.

This law has been recognized and acted upon in all the communications and revelations of Himself which God has made to the race. The rays which shone upon man during the patriarchal dispensation were few and feeble ; yet they were all he was able to bear, or that his condition demanded. Under Moses the light was measurably increased, and also through successive stages, under the ministration of seers and prophets, until Christ came, and 'brought life and immortality to light,' pouring a flood of heavenly truth on the expanding intellect and heart of man. But even Christ had 'many things' to teach which the most enlightened of his day 'could not bear,' and he left them to be communicated by 'the Spirit of Truth,' who should 'abide forever' with his followers, guiding them 'into all truth,' as they should be prepared to receive it, and showing them 'things to come.' (John 16 : 12, 13. 14 : 16, 17.) And no one will pretend that either the race, or any part of it, has yet arrived at its highest stage of advancement, or its highest capacity for receiving truth.

On the contrary, all that is made known respecting the future

condition of mankind on earth, tends only the more fully to develop and establish this law of progression. That a state of immeasurable improvement is to be reached, in all that concerns the outward, physical life of man, is fully evident both from what we see transpiring before our eyes from year to year, and from the glowing predictions concerning the 'latter days' which so abound in the prophetic scriptures. Not only is man to advance in knowledge of the means by which he can subjugate the forces of nature to his use, but there is to be a corresponding progress in the developments and productions of nature herself. 'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree.' (Isa. 55: 13.) 'The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.' (Isa. 35: 1, 6.) 'And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them; . . . . and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble,' neither shall there be any ravenous beast or poisonous reptile to 'hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain.' (Isa. 65: 21—25. 11: 6, 9.) Man shall so understand and obey the laws of his being that 'the inhabitant shall not say I am sick;' (Isa. 33: 24) and 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain.'' (Rev. 21: 4.) 'For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind.' (Isa. 65: 17.)

But man's moral and spiritual development are also to keep pace with his physical and intellectual. And instead of there being here and there one or two in an age specially raised up and qualified, as seers, prophets, apostles or teachers, to be the mediums through whom God's truth can be communicated to the race, all shall become so advanced that they will have no need of such mediumship on the part of others. 'After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.' (Jer. 31: 33, 34. Heb. 8: 10, 11.) Then shall have fully come the 'Kingdom of God,' for which we daily pray. Then shall His 'will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.' But that this result is to be brought about by the gradual operation of adequate causes, rather than by any instantaneous putting forth of Divine power, agrees with all we know of God's method of advancing His kingdom. There must be 'first the blade, then the ear; afterwards the full corn in the ear.' The leaven is to extend gradually, until the whole mass is pervaded. (Luke 13: 21.) 'For AS *the earth bringeth forth her buds, and* AS *the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth*; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.' (Isa. 61: 11.)

But this all-pervading law of progression bears upon each individual as well as upon the race. Every being that has been or will be brought into existence is the subject of it, and under its operation makes some advancement during the earthly life. This advancement respects, first, the physical, then the mental, moral and spiritual nature; and under the process, as affected by constitutional organization, circumstances, advantages, and disposition to make use of advantages, we see exhibited around us every conceivable gradation of attainment in knowledge, wisdom, goodness and happiness. The '*evil*' that we see in man arises only from an imperfect or incomplete development of what was made to be, and what will be when completed, '*good*.' (Gen. 1: 31.)

That this process of development is confined to the earthly life, we see no reason to believe; but that, on the contrary, after the spirit has thrown off the earthly tenement, and arisen to a higher form of life, it must still continue to advance, seems to be inevitable from the law of its constitution. Moreover, we find no evidence, either from reason, from scripture rightly interpreted, or from the nature of God, that He will withhold from any soul, in the future life, the means or opportunity of advancement. The Father's paternal heart yearns after the repentant, returning prodigal, whenever and wherever he repents and returns; and the time shall come when all His wandering offspring—'for we are also His offspring' (Acts 17: 28)—shall come back to the Father's House —when 'ALL THINGS shall be subdued unto Him . . . . that God may be ALL IN ALL.' (1 Cor. 15: 28.)

A most important step in individual progression, and one which is taken alike by all, is the casting off of the earthly body, and the arising to a higher form of life in the spirit-world. This is the scripture doctrine of the '*resurrection*'—it was clearly taught by Christ and his apostles—but it has become strangely misunderstood and perverted throughout all Christendom. That doctrine is,—not that ages hence, when these physical bodies shall have crumbled into dust, and been resolved into their original elements, and entered into the constituents of other human bodies, perhaps many times over,—that then our spirits, which have been all this time we know not where, shall be brought back and re-united with the gathered particles of matter with which they were once associated, then to arise to the higher life,—it is no such crude, contradictory and impossible speculation; — but it is plainly this, that the resurrection in all cases shortly succeeds the death of the body—that 'the dead ARE RAISED,' and the process has been and is constantly going forward under the great universal law that evolves the plant from the seed, the butterfly from the worm, the spiritual body from the physical.

That this was the teaching of Christ is evident from his argument with the Sadducees: 'Now that the dead ARE raised' [not *shall be*], 'even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; for He is not a God of the dead but of the living; for all live unto Him.'

(Luke 20 : 37, 38.) How does this argument prove the doctrine of the resurrection, unless Christ means to assert that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were 'living,' at the time of Moses, in the resurrection-state? Nothing can be more evident than that such is his meaning; and if the patriarchs had been raised to a state of equality with and likeness to the angels (Luke 20 : 36. Mark 12 : 25. Matt. 22 : 30), so had been all other men who had died.

So taught Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, making indeed the resurrection of Christ himself to be in accordance with and dependent upon this universal law. 'FOR IF THE DEAD RISE NOT, THEN IS NOT CHRIST RAISED.' (1 Cor. 15 : 16, &c.)

But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? This identical question was asked and fully answered eighteen hundred years ago; but how strangely blind have we been to the meaning of that answer! If the apostle termed him a 'fool' who made the inquiry, what would he have thought of us who have failed for so long to comprehend the reply? He points to the natural world, ever teeming with its myriad transformations and resurrections before our eyes, and bids us view the process there. When we deposit the grain of seed in the earth, it is not that same grain which is to come up again in the new plant—'thou sowest not that body that shall be;'—but the germ, the life-principle encased within, this springs up, unfolds in a new life, and develops a new creation of beauty. So the germ, the life-principle, the SPIRIT or 'spiritual body' of man emerges from its clayey tenement into an incorruptible, spiritual existence. 'For there is a natural [physical] body, and *there is* a spiritual body;'—the physical being first developed, afterwards the spiritual. 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. . . . And then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory!' (1 Cor. 15 : 36—54.)

Such, then, we conceive to be the true Christian doctrine of the resurrection. Who does not see that it is natural, rational, beautiful, glorious!—worthy the preëminence assigned to it by the founders of Christianity, and worthy the great Author by whose power it is wrought?

The transformation, however, can no more change the mental or moral character of the man, nor alter his relations to God and the universe, than does the casting off of a worn-out garment—except so far as it shall place him under the reach of new and more powerful external influences, which may be good or evil, tending upward or downward, according to his affinities and aspirations. Hence it is that we find indubitable evidence of the same gradations of character and attainment, both mental and moral, in the spirit-world, that are exhibited in this world; hence the variety of opinion, the contrariety of statement, and the evident want of wisdom on the part of many who have undertaken to communicate to men; and hence, also, the absolute necessity of purity of motive, simplicity of heart, and an earnest desire for the wis-

dom which is from above on the part of those who would attract to them teachers of exalted wisdom and goodness.

Having said thus much of the great law of progression, we would glance at what appears to be the chief instrumentality through which spiritual advancement is carried forward. That God works by means, or instrumentalities, in all His operations, in all departments of the universe, agrees with all that we know of His method of working. Does he sustain our physical life and health?—He does it by means of food, air, and other conditions, either of which being wanting, life or health will cease. Does he give us our daily bread?—It is done, not by His own hand extended to place it in our mouths, but through the operation of a chain of instruments which prepare and supply it to us. So if He sustains our spiritual life, and works in us to advance and perfect it, He does it by instrumentalities; and among those instrumentalities are spiritual beings—'angels who excel in strength,' 'ministers of His who do His pleasure'—appointed to be the channels of communication between our spirits and the Infinite Fountain from whence emanate all life and love. 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' (Heb. 1: 14.)

But who are these 'angels,' and what are their relations to us? Are they a distinct and higher order of intelligences, having no affinities or relationship with man? or are they human spirits, the spirits of 'just men made perfect,' our 'elder brothers,' exalted to a higher sphere of usefulness, and still actively employed as messengers of the Highest, in doing His will? We answer unhesitatingly, the latter; and again we appeal to the scriptures to bear testimony to this most interesting truth. Jesus declared to the Sadducees that in the resurrection-state, men become '*as* the angels of God' (Matt. 22: 30)—'*as* the angels which are in heaven' (Mark 12: 25)—'*equal* unto the angels.' (Luke 20: 36.) Being made, in the present rudimental form, 'a little lower than the angels' (Ps. 8: 5), we are, in that next stage of our being, advanced to an equality of grade with them; and 'if *like* them, why should we not be engaged in *like* employment?' This question will not be new to your ears—it having been propounded from our own pulpit, by our own pastor, not many weeks since.* Moreover, angels who have appeared on earth have always appeared in the human form; and Daniel, in the passages to which we have already referred, repeatedly terms those who were sent unto him, 'men,' not excepting Gabriel himself, whom he calls 'the *man* Gabriel.' (9: 21.) But there is one other passage, already quoted, which is sufficient to place this matter in a most unquestionable light, namely, the direct avowal of the angel who communicated to John the revelations of the Apocalypse—'I am thy fellow-servant, and of THY BRETHREN THE PROPHETS.' (Rev. 22: 9.)

It seems probable therefore, that with the exception, perhaps, of

*Rev. Mr. Pond's recent discourse on the "Ministry of Angels."

Christ, the exalted Mediator, no any other beings have ever been employed in communicating with our earth, than human spirits, raised to higher degrees of intelligence, purity and power. And who so likely to be employed in this ministry of love to each of us, as those who have been here united to us by the ties of affinity, relationship and affection? They have loved to serve and to bless us while in the body—can they have become cold and indifferent, wrapped themselves in selfishness and retired to seek only their own enjoyment, now that they have entered a higher and purer sphere? Who can believe this?—or that, still yearning over, and seeking to minister unto the objects of their affection, they are debarred from a source of happiness so pure and God-like, while another race of beings, having no sympathies in common with us, are appointed to the service? Such may be man's theology, but such is not God's wisdom. He has made LOVE the golden chain which binds the universe of beings to His glorious throne. *We* are made, by the law of nature and of God, the guardians and instructors of those who stand in the relation of children or dependents to us, and it is our duty and delight to minister to their wants, and to aid and guide the unfoldings of their being. There are those more advanced who stand in the same relations to ourselves, have the same affections, and still perform the same duties. And above *these*, again, is a higher grade, still farther advanced in knowledge, purity and bliss, which they delight to transmit to those below—and thus on, and on, in an indissoluble chain of love, running up through all generations of men, and through all grades of advancement, till it links into the being of Him from whom all life and being sprang!

Thus is formed an unbroken channel through which flow out from the exhaustless Fountain the treasures of life, truth, wisdom and goodness, imparting bliss and purity as they flow, to all grades of intelligences, according to the capacity or degree of expansion of each, till they reach the remotest rudimental conditions of being. Hence it is seen that inspiration, or the communication of truth and wisdom from above, is both natural and universal; and that it comes in varying degrees of purity and fullness, as modified by the channel *through* which it comes, and the capacities of the vessel *into* which it is poured. We are not then to look for it only in here and there an individual in ages by-gone, or in the pages of one book, or one set of books, written centuries ago and never to be extended—but ALL truth is God's truth, ALL CREATED THINGS are HIS BOOK, and ALL light is from 'the Father of Lights . . . . from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift.' (James 1 : 17.)

There are many other points on which our eyes have been opened to, as we think, a higher view and a clearer vision than we entertained before; but it will be impossible to present them adequately to your minds in a communication like this. We would frankly say, however, that we wish no longer to be considered as bound

to any particular view of truth, or any form of its expression—for we feel that as yet we have caught but the few first beams of a glorious day now dawning, whose light shall be such as earth has never yet seen. Like dwellers in the shady valley, who have begun to ascend the mountains that before had limited their view, and are enabled to take in a wider range of vision, we see those eminences of truth which once seemed the very pillars of heaven, overtopped by others before hidden from view, but of still greater magnitude, and the whole landscape assumes a new appearance. Thus we expect the view will continue to change and to enlarge as we ascend, and we know not what heights are yet before us. For 'it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the TOP of the mountains, and shall be exalted *above the hills;* and all nations shall flow unto it.' (Isa. 2: 3.) These 'last days,' so long predicted, we believe are now dawning upon the world. Let us then, 'leaving the *principles* [the *first* things] of the doctrine of Christ, go on to perfection.' (Heb. 6: 1.) Let us no longer imagine that 'only in this mountain' of our former limited conceptions we can acceptably 'worship the Father,' but every where in the broad realm of truth, and under the glowing sunlight of His love, and in the high and pure atmosphere breathed around us by angelic beings, let us bow, and rejoice, and adore. For we 'are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly of the church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all.' (Heb. 12: 22—24.) Yes, dear brothers and sisters, 'this day are these scriptures fulfilled in your ears;' and it is your privilege as well as ours to know and to *realize* the fact. We feel that so great blessings cannot be ours alone to enjoy. We know, from evidence, unmistakable to us, though imperceptible to you, that there are those among your number who may speedily be made sensible, in their own persons, of those 'manifestations of the spirit' which existed in the primitive days of the church, (1 Cor. 12—14.) and whose recent developments we have described to you; and thus may we enjoy a true 'outpouring of the Spirit,' with visible demonstrations of His power as miraculous and convincing as ever were granted to the church—yea, greater even than those. Suffer us, then with all proper humility, but with all earnestness, to exhort you to heed the apostolic injunctions, so apposite to this matter: 'Quench not the spirit; despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (1 Thess. 5: 19—21); and to 'beware lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.' (Acts 13: 40, 41.)

We are fully aware that we have presented before you strange and startling things; but they are no more strange and startling to you than they have been to us. We doubt not that some of the

sentiments advanced will, at the first view, seem to be wide departures from the true faith, if not utterly subversive of the very foundations of all religion. We have shared with you all these imaginings, and can fully sympathize with your fears. But you will remember that it has been the fate of every new truth, or rather of every truth when newly developed to mankind, to meet with the same objections, and to be compelled to force its way into the convictions of men in spite of their theological systems and their accustomed interpretations of scripture. Thus was it with Christianity itself; and thus with its revival under the name of Protestantism, in the days of the Reformers. Thus has it been with the developments of Astronomy, Physiology, Phrenology, and latterly Geology. Each in its turn has been anathematized as the enemy of revelation and the foe of true religion. But each has become demonstrated truth, and then it has been found an easy matter for theologians to adjust their religious philosophy and their scripture interpretations to these truths. The same process will continue to be required, till men shall see the folly of attempting to confine their expanding natures within the infantile garments of the past, or to crowd a universe of truth into the meagre limits of a creed.

But we cannot expect you at once to perceive these truths as we see them. It has cost us many months of investigation, of earnest thought, of agonizing prayer, and of painful struggles against the advancing light; and we can well afford to allow you at least an equal amount of time. Indeed, it will be no matter of surprise should you judge us to have become apostates from the truth, and unworthy of your continued fellowship, or of the Christian name. Yet much as we should regret the interruption of the fraternal relations which have subsisted between us, there is another thing which we should still more regret, and that is, being compelled to stifle the deepest and most earnest convictions of our souls, and to withhold from our fellow men the 'glad tidings of great joy' which have been sounded in our ears. And even though the fate awaited us which in former days was the portion of all who were so fortunate (or *un*fortunate) as to be made the recipients of a truth not recognized in the canons of the church—even though the dungeon, the rack and the faggot were staring us in the face—we could only say with Luther as he stood before his persecutors, 'MAY GOD HELP US: WE CAN SPEAK NO OTHERWISE.'

In conclusion, therefore, we feel in duty bound to request a release from all obligations or limitations, either expressed or implied in our relationship with you, which are inconsistent with the views and convictions herein laid before you, or with whatever truths may yet be opened before us in our ascending life and the unfolding universe of God.

Yours in the love of Christ,
and the light of the New Dispensation,

A. E. NEWTON,
S. J. NEWTON.

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