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THE
SPIRITUALIST'S PLEA

WITH THE
BIBLE BELIEVER.

A DIALOGUE.

BY J. S. LOVELAND.

BOSTON:
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DIALOGUE.

Spiritualist.—I understand, brother, that you have conceived a very strong antipathy against the Spiritual Manifestations, and that you base your opposition upon Bible grounds, and pride yourself in being called a Bible Believer.

Bible Believer.—It is true, I rejoice in being able to say with a distinguished man, “the Bible—the Bible—the religion of protestants.” And I look with profound contempt upon all this miserable humbug of Spiritualism, so called.

Spiritualist.—If it will not be asking too much of you, I should be pleased to hear the ground of your objections stated, and by an examination see how they will stand the test of a scriptural comparison.

Bible Believer.—I have no objection to this course, and will offer, what seem to me, insuperable objections against the theory, drawn from the Scriptures. I object, in the first place, that it is *utterly improbable*. We have, in the Bible, a perfect rule of faith and manners, and it is not to be supposed that *another* rule, which, if true, must be in harmony therewith, would be given, for it would be superfluous.

Spiritualist.—You have put your objection in as strong a light as possible, but it strikes me as being more specious than sound. I presume you admit that the New Testament harmonizes with the Old. Suppose a Jew to assail the New Testament on the same ground you occupy as to the manifestations. The Old Testament, he asserts, is a God-inspired book. You assent. He declares a perfect law and a perfect rule of manners to be therein revealed. You agree to this also. He asserts farther, that the doctrines of a true faith are taught there, and he sustains his positions by an appeal to the record itself, and to Christian writings. Then he argues, that if the

New Testament *conflicts* with the Old, it is false, but if it *agrees* therewith, it is superfluous; and, therefore, it is entirely improbable that an additional and unnecessary revelation would be made. He adds, your Teacher never intimated any dissent from the Old Testament, or that any addition would be made to it; and indignantly demands why you have bound up the New Testament with the true Scriptures. How will you reply to him?

Bible Believer.—O, there is no difficulty in that. I admit the Old Testament to be an inspired book—to contain a perfect law, and also to teach all the doctrines needful for man to believe; but there is an important consideration overlooked in your statement of the Jew's argument. The Old Testament contains all these, but there is much obscurity resting upon it, in consequence of its antiquity, style, etc., which renders something farther necessary. Much of the Old Testament is given in the form of type and allegory, and in the New these are explained; so that there is not contradiction, but explanation and confirmation.

Spiritualist.—I am much obliged to you for suggesting the omission, as it is the very point which shows the weakness of your objection to the new manifestations. You will not pretend to say that the New Testament is, *all of it*, so plain that he who runs may read. In proof of this, look at the long array of commentators, with such an amount of talent, and such extensive and varied learning, employed to *explain* the Bible; and finding the New Testament as difficult as the old. And, if the obscurity of the one made the other necessary, then the same necessity exists for something farther now. To say the least, the Spiritualist can make as strong a plea with you as you can with the Jew.

Bible Believer.—I see I must yield that point, but I still urge my objection on another ground. It seems to me utterly improbable that *such persons* should be employed as mediums. I am informed that the manifestations are often made through persons of no religious experience whatever—infidel, if not

immoral. I cannot suppose the God of the Bible to sanction any thing of the kind.

Spiritualist.—I might quote to you the words of the Teacher, "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" and consider an ample reply given, but I will examine this phase of the objection more at length. If I mistake not, I have heard you express a very unfavorable opinion of Balaam, yet you quote his prophecy as inspiration, predicting not only good to the Jews, but also announcing the Messiah himself. Jonah does not stand *very* high for piety, nor does his history intimate that he deserved much praise as a *religious* man, yet he was a medium for Divine communications. But, without multiplying instances, I will cite you to the Witch of Endor. Her character for piety is not very good with Bible Believers, yet she was the instrument of accomplishing one of the most strange and wondrous events recorded in the Bible. I am inclined to think the mediums of the present day will compare favorably with those of past times.

Bible Believer.—I confess I never looked at the subject in this light, but I am satisfied the thing is *impossible*, for good spirits would not, and bad ones could not communicate with mortals.

Spiritualist.—You are a little too fast in this objection, I apprehend. Good spirits, you say, would not come to us. Why? Have they lost all remembrance, sympathy and interest in their earthly kindred? Does the mother, whose last breath was prayer for the babe she left behind, forget that love as soon as she stands in the spirit world? Does the *mother* die with the body? And is that child, when its young breath is departing, deceived, when, throwing up its wasted hands, it feebly articulates "mother," and is gone? If one sinner's repentance inspires joy in Heaven, who are they that rejoice? Have the spirits of the just no interest in the welfare of those left behind, in the earthly home? Does St. Paul, think you, regard the work of the world's regeneration with less interest now, than when he was willing to do, and suffer so much to advance it? And would not the same spirit, which led him

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to prefer a life of toil and suffering to the glorious presence of Jesus, bring him back to seek "to save some?" Think you the breath of heaven is such, that to inhale it induces an indifference in its inhabitants to the welfare of mortals; and a wish to do nothing for the good of others? Is Heaven a state of lethargy? And, if your religion is of that character that you wish "to get away into Heaven" to escape doing good to others, I am afraid you will find yourself a long distance from Him whose "meat and drink" was to "go about doing good." But I would like to have you account for the appearance of Samuel to Saul, Moses and Elias to Christ—one of the old prophets to St. John, and the many other similar spiritual manifestations, *if* it is impossible for good spirits to come back and make known their existence and love to men? These instances are sufficient to prove that good spirits *would* come to us, yea, that they have come in time past, and hence, may *again*. "Bad ones," you say, "cannot come." Now this is a most singular assertion for you to make, when your whole theory recognizes the idea of *multitudes* of evil spirits, "going about the earth, seeking whom they may devour." Hear the voice of the church:

"Angels your march oppose,
 Who sulk in strength excel,
 Your secret, sworn, eternal foes,
 Countless, invisible:
 From thrones of glory driven,
 By flaming vengeance hurled,
 They swarm the earth and darken heaven,
 And rule this lower world."

Surely, if the earth "*swarms*" with evil spirits, so much so that the world is "*ruled*" by them, I don't see how, on your own theory, you could offer this objection. I know you will say, *these* evil spirits are fallen angels, but I must remind you that the story of fallen angels is a fable, and rests not for authority on Holy Scripture. Indeed, there is no proof, that angels are anything but developed men. Do you not, as a Bible believer, contend that Christ "cast out unclean spirits," or demons? And need I tell you that the Greek word, trans-

lated devils, should *always* be rendered demons; and farther, that demon signifies the spirit of a former denizen of earth? Nor does the Bible any where give the slightest hint that these demons were fallen angels; or, indeed, anything else than what their name imports. Here, then, from your own book, is it shown that spirits, good and bad, do revisit this mundane sphere. What will you say now?

Bible Believer.—Well, I must confess, you have the best of the argument so far; but do you find anything to warrant the idea that these visits would be more frequent than is usually thought to be the case, i. e., “few and far between.”

Spiritualist.—To be sure I do. I find the Bible abounding with passages asserting the fact of spiritual manifestations. To whom does Paul refer, Heb. 12: 1, by the phrase, “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” but the spirits of the ancient worthies, of whom he had been speaking in the eleventh chapter? No language could assert anything plainer, than this declares the *presence* and *interest* of departed spirits with the living. But if it needs any additional confirmation, it is found in the same chapter. He says, “we are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born—and to the SPIRITS of just men made perfect.” There is no evading the direct bearing of this text. Comment is superfluous. And has not God promised to “give his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways?” Does not “the angel of the Lord encamp about them that fear Him?” Was not the sight of the prophet’s servant, when he saw the mountain filled with “horses and chariots of fire,” real? And what reason have we for thinking that every good man is not similarly favored? And has not the church always recognized this same idea, in asserting its faith in “the communion of saints?” Are all the saints here below? Has not “part of the host already crossed the flood, and part are crossing now?” And are they not “one family, above, beneath, though now divided by the stream, the narrow stream of death?” Most surely God has but “one church,” on earth and in heaven; for “the kingdoms are but *one*.” In the above, and kindred words, the most sacred feel-

ings, and purest faith of the church have found an expression. The celebrated John Wesley gives various instances of alleged spiritual manifestations, and it is certain that *he* never would have recorded *such* accounts, had he entertained the same opinions professed by some of his *pretended* followers.

The wife of the pious Fletcher, of Madely, held conscious communion with her sainted husband for years after his exit from earth—indeed, till the time of her death. Intercourse with departed spirits has been no strange thing among Methodists through all their history. Have you ever read the life of that impersonation of earnest, self-denying benevolence—Oberlin? If so, you know his views and experience on this subject. And, notwithstanding the famous Swedenborg has been called a madman, yet he has furnished the most convincing proof that spirits are in constant communication with mortals. And what shall I say more, for time would fail me to relate the views of the early and purest fathers of the church on this subject. But this I will say, that in all ages this idea has *obtained*, not only among the ignorant and unlearned of the church, but among its purest and most learned doctors; and *never*, till this material age, was the church found arrayed against it. This amazing fact is significant of the infidelity which has crept into the church, and *there* finds a welcome residence.

Bible Believer.—I was not aware of such a mass of testimony as you have cited, but still I have no opinion of *these* “manifestations,” they are so *low*, *vulgar* and *undignified*, I cannot believe that anything coming by the sanction of God would *descend* to such a *contemptible* mode of communication.

Spiritualist.—It seems to me that Bible believers should be the last persons to offer objections of *this* character. Does not that book everywhere go on the principle that high and haughty looks are to be brought down, yea abased in the dust. Does it not assert that “God hath chosen the weak—the base and despised things even, to bring to nought”—to confound the proud, worldly—wiseman? And, does a believer in

that book, with that principle before him, come forward with *such* an objection? But we are ready to look this objection directly in the face, and that, too, in the light of Bible examples. On a certain religious festival "a man after God's own heart" divested himself of his outer garments, and, though a crowned monarch, he leaped and capered "with all his might" before the ark of God, to the great offence of certain nice, fastidious persons, who thought it very "*low*" and *peculiarly* "undignified" for "the king of Israel" to so expose himself in a promiscuous company. His answer, to some extent, is commended to you, and others who object in the same way. What dignified employment for an inspired prophet to be engaged in making "Yokes" and sending them around to Princes, or a pair of "Horns" for himself; also to hide a girdle until rotten and then putting it around his loins! But far *higher and more "dignified"* is it to see him with a tile, whereon is traced the outline of a city, before him, and lying for weeks and months upon one side, and then turning upon the other for a long time; and above all, to see him eating and drinking with quaking and trembling, and cooking his food with the *dung of BEASTS!* And what "*dignity*" in the great ado he makes about his hair, cutting it off—smiting part of it with a sword—burning another part—scattering another to the winds, and finally tying up a few in a string! "Dignity," indeed!

Bible Believer.—Do you mean to slander the word of God in this manner? You, certainly, have had the means of knowing that these things are *highly symbolical*, and were employed, in Divine wisdom, as best adapted to the end designed; and though not in themselves peculiarly dignified, yet in the *manner* in which they were used, and the ends proposed, they acquire a sacredness which should shield them from the sneering insinuations you have just made. I don't wish to hear God's Book treated in that manner.

Spiritualist.—I beg pardon for the offence, but I wished to make you expose the sophistry of your own objection, and

most admirably have you done it. I am much obliged to you for the clearness with which you have accomplished the work. Do you not see that when, considering any spiritual phenomena, you take into account "the ends proposed," it puts an entirely new aspect upon the whole matter? Indeed, without this principle, what would our carping critics have done, had they seen the Lord, when "He spat upon the ground" and daubed the blind man's eyes with mud? Why they would do as they now do, think it a horrible insult to dignity, and, like the haughty Syrian, go away in a great rage. This they do when the boon of sight is offered them.

Bible Believer.—I dont see but I must yield this point, or give up my own principles of Biblical exegesis; but I have still another objection, which you will not find so facile in yielding to your explanations. I call it a poser on all this "rapping" and "tipping" business. These spirits, whoever or *whatever* they may be, are lying and deceiving ones; and, therefore, I reject the whole as essentially unscriptural.

Spiritualist.—Really this is a very convenient method of evading a difficulty, but as your objection does not seem to me a very formidable one, notwithstanding your high opinion of it, I will grapple with it and test its power. Allow me to whisper in your ear, that the *moral character* of the communications can afford no possible proof of the essential nature of the agents producing them. And here I might rest the argument, but, as you are disposed to listen, I wish to give you the benefit of a little spiritual and scriptural truth. And in the outset, it is needful to say, that *more*, vastly more lies have been told about lying spirits than they themselves have ever uttered. Now we will refer "to the law and the testimony," and see what they report as to the matter. You are well aware that the whole Jewish history abounds with instances of deception; and not a few of them have the alleged sanction of Jehovah, either directly or indirectly.

Bible Believer.—No, indeed, I am not aware of any such thing, and I very much regret to hear you retailing infidel

slanders upon the Bible. I have heard that you was becoming an infidel, and am sorry to find it true.

Spiritualist.—Don't be too fast, my brother; possibly I have read *some things* in the Bible as well as yourself, and seeing you are rather sensitive on this point, I will be very particular in my argument. For an express declaration, I cite you to Jer. 20: 7—"O Lord *thou* has deceived me, and I was deceived." For a comment upon this, please consult I. Kings 22: 20, 23, where you will find detailed a deliberately concocted scheme, on the part of the Lord and a certain lying spirit, to deceive Ahab and compass his death. The Lord first inquires who will "entice, or deceive Ahab, (see marginal reading) that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead." Various propositions are made, but none seem satisfactory to the Lord, until a "*lying spirit*" comes forth and submits his plan, which is to deceive Ahab's prophets. The Lord *approves* this plan, and sends him forth on his lying mission, with the assurance of success. "Now, therefore," says the true prophet, "behold the Lord *hath put* a lying spirit in the mouth of all thy prophets." Nor are these instances to be explained away, by any special pleading, for the very principle of deception, involved in them, is submitted in another place, as the one governing the Lord in all his communications to mortals. If you will consult Eze. 14, you will see a full exposition of this principle. The reason why deceptive answers were given, according to this exposition, is because those who seek them "have set up their idols in their hearts." And those, who, like Jehoshaphat, are found *among* the deceptive, *seeking* communications from God, or spirits, may expect to have the same answers. And I wish you to take special notice that God declares, in the ninth verse, "and if the prophet be deceived, when he hath spoken a thing, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet." And is not this "answering a fool according to his folly?" Does it not illustrate the assertion, "with the froward, thou wilt show thyself froward?" Now, dear brother, I fancy spiritualists will find no trouble in satisfactorily accounting for all the alleged contradictory, and lying communica-

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tions, yea, for all that are thought to be "low and undignified" also, when you have explained the above texts, so as to free the Lord from the imputation of deliberate falsehood. And when you have done that, there are more in reserve. But, if we accept the solution, as there given, that the character of the seeker governs the truthfulness of the responses, then may we cease to be astonished that lying answers are sometimes given. And, in this connection, I beg your serious attention to one fact, which has a significancy not to be passed over lightly. Nearly all these pretended lying responses, and mischievous pranks, have occurred in the families of the most orthodox believers in deceiving devils and kindred superstitions. Now is it true, as Ezekiel intimates, that they, coming to consult spirits, with their hearts full of these old heathen idols, under the name of devils, find themselves answered "according to the multitude of their idols?" Mark, these idols are "in their hearts," i. e., in their opinions or faith. But, while *they* are thus answered, persons, who, with an honest love of truth, are free from those "idols," are favored with noble and truthful communications. To *one more fact*, I will refer you, and then submit the argument on this point. I enter an imposing edifice. I see an assembly of reverend men in black, who are termed "God's ministers." I hear these men praying and talking together with great professions of esteem and charity. They recognize each other as God's chosen ambassadors to men. But, on attending the personal ministrations of these same men, I find their communications to be *very* contradictory indeed. One denounces as a "damnable heresy" what the other preaches as "God's truth." One preaches the *decreed* damnation of multitudes, according to the most rigid Calvinism, while the other, in the excess of his Arminian zeal, denounces this communication as hopelessly false, and as making God worse than the Devil. But *these* are both "God's ministers." He has "*called*" them, and sent them forth to utter these contradictory communications—to lie in His name; for one or the other notion must be false. Opposites cannot both be true. And, mark you, these men

were "called" with the perfect knowledge that they would contradict each other; yea, their notions were utterly inharmonious *when* they received their "call," yet God said to them go, and wo unto you if you preach not the doctrine you believe. Here, then, is a class, whom you regard as "called of God," continually contradicting each other. If "God's own chosen ministers" are employed in the work of deception, I see no reason why you should find any fault with deceiving spirits, who are much more harmonious than "God's ministers," and as truthful as many of his prophets. When you can explain the one, the other will not be difficult. Perhaps it might have been as well to have suspended your charge of infidelity for a season.

Bible Believer.—I beg pardon for my hasty charge; and really I hardly know what to say to your explanation of this point. I shall have to think it over, for I am not prepared to reply to your views. I wonder I never thought of them before; but still are not these manifestations the *effect* of some hitherto unknown law of the human organism; and, therefore, admit of a scientific explanation? I think they may.

Spiritualist.—If I mistake not, I once heard you contending against making science a test of spiritual things. You argued that every subject evolves its own laws, which laws are the external indications of the internal force, or principle there existent, or operative; or, in other words, law is only a method by which something is done by an intelligent agent; and, hence, you urged that the laws of nature, so called, are only God's methods of acting, or manifestation, in the physical universe, but that His actings, in the physical, was no rule, or test, by which to try His manifestations in the universe of spirit. These were your positions in arguing with a scientific infidel, and you cannot complain if I retort your own argument upon yourself. If we are not to apply a scientific analysis to professed spiritualistic manifestations, why are you urging them here? When your own notions are assailed by scientific objections, you declaim most vehemently against "vain philo-

sophy and oppositions," or explanations "of science;" but when spiritualism presents its claims, every clerical coxcomb in the land is shouting most lustily about science, and "scientific explanations." Let any one attempt to account for your *pretended* supernatural conversions, on scientific principles, and every hand is raised in pious horror, and the cry of "infidel" is sounded far and wide. And yet I pledge myself to *demonstrate*, that all your revival excitement and conversion is the veriest psychological phenomena imaginable, when you have given a *scientific* expose of spiritualism. But I am under the necessity of showing you that your pretended "scientific explanation" is a two-edged sword, and in attempting to wield it against Spiritualists, you have grasped it by the blade. It will prove harmless to them, but terrible will be its ruinous influence upon sectarian religion. It is amusing, and yet painful, to see professed teachers, ministers of truth, eagerly swallowing the whole of Rogers' pamphlets, and parrot-like repeating them to their congregations, as a "scientific explanation" of the "rapping humbug." Is "humbug" a *scientific* matter? And all this too, when the whole *spirituality* of religion, yea, the entire *inspiration* of the Bible, is annihilated by his principles of interpretation. Allow all to be true, which is claimed by Rogers as fundamentally so, and you clearly prove that all inspiration, and spiritual manifestation of every kind, are nothing but the involuntary actings of the "Cerebral Automaton," or "Automatic Man;" for, if "every physical phenomenon has for its production a physical agent," or cause, and if the physical, or *automatic* nature is susceptible, in certain circumstances, of assuming any identity from "Deity to a toad," how natural and easy the exposition of all Bible facts upon merely scientific principles. "The Cerebral Automaton,"—"Heaven save the mark," in those old prophets, got excited and performed some of those antics, for which he is becoming so famous in these last days, and with that peculiar deceivableness, which so strangely characterizes him, he evades all personal responsibility, by ascribing it all to the Lord, (the

"identity of Deity.") So all the exercises, connected with the *experience* of religion, are only the freaks of this psychologised "Automaton." Very marked "physical phenomena" attended the exercises of the Bible prophets, as well as the revival manifestations of the present day, and according to the "scientific explanation" all "*physical phenomena*" must have physical causes, and never be attributed to spiritual agency, for that would be unscientific, "fanciful, whimsical." Indeed, sir, this "scientific explanation" is terrible business, for not only does it *explain* the "rapping humbug," but it explains the soul out of the body, and God out of the universe; and leaves nothing but the blind play of automatic forces! True, the would-be-explainer files in a caveat against this conclusion, on the plea of "self-consciousness;" but this plea cannot save him, or his theory, for how is he aware of this "self-consciousness," but from the fact, that certain "changes in the brain" attend the passage of this "self-consciousness" into, or its ultimating itself in the outer, or common consciousness. Most obviously, there is no other process, and, as many of the phenomena, connected with this most interior and recondite exercise of the human soul, are physical, it follows as inevitable inference that the soul is physical also. The same remarks apply with equal, or even greater force to the idea of a spiritual Deity, and the Psalmist was a stupid ass in saying "the heavens declare the glory of God;" for they exhibit only "physical phenomena;" and could our modern sages have informed him that it was unscientific to attribute them to spiritual causes, he would not have perpetrated such an egregious, philosophic blunder. Nor would Paul have uttered such a silly proposition as this, "the invisible," (i. e., spiritual) "things of Him from the creation are clearly seen (?) being understood by the things that are made," had he comprehended modern science! Alas! for us, we are in a sad dilemma; we look in every direction for some proof of a spiritual Deity, and also of our own spirituality, but there is no hope, for this terrible spectre of "physical phenomena" meets us at every turn, and with a most

wicked leer, sneeringly whispers "*Cerebral Automaton*." I might dwell longer on this point, but trust enough has been said to show you the untenableness of your objection.

Bible Believer.—But why, if they are spirits, do they not come and speak with us face to face?

Spiritualist.—Why did Elisha want music before he could prophecy? Why did the prophets so often fall down in a deep sleep, or trance, when receiving messages from God? Why has God, in all His dispensations to man, so arranged as to abase his pride? Why does He choose the weak and foolish to confound the wise? This, you assume he does do; and does it not answer your inquiry? Consider, also, that we are not acquainted with all the laws and principles governing this new development of spiritual agency. Nor do we know how much good may be accomplished by the despised rappings. Many minds are so sensual as to be incapable of appreciating a lofty intellectual communication, who, nevertheless, can comprehend the use of the raps, tips, etc. Few are so free from the superstitions of the past, as to endure the sight of a spirit, without being distracted by fear. A few *have* enjoyed this blessed privilege already, and by promise we are all assured of such converse when conditions will admit. Spirits, in their wisdom, see best to learn their earthly brothers the alphabet of spiritual science, before leading them into its profound depths; and all these inferior things contribute to the glorious end. It behooves us, then, to receive with gladness the initiatory lessons which spirits see fit to give us.

Bible Believer.—You have nearly, or quite demolished my objections. I had no idea so much could be said in favor of these things, and I shall immediately investigate them; for if you are correct, we, who have thought ourselves true Bible believers, are the very ones who, in reality, deny it; for it abounds with spiritual manifestations. I think it would be well for many of us to re-read our Bibles in reference to this subject, for I had no conception of such statements being in the Bible, till you repeated them.

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