

# SPIRITUALISM

*Is it a Savage Superstition?*

## A LECTURE

BY

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GIVEN AT THE OPERA HOUSE, MELBOURNE, ON SUNDAY  
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**George Robertson**  
MELBOURNE, SYDNEY, AND ADELAIDE  
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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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SOME months ago, the Victorian Association of Spiritualists of this city, sent Mrs. E. H. Britten an invitation to visit Melbourne for the purpose of giving a series of lectures on Spiritualism, and Free-Thought subjects. Mrs. Britten responded to that invitation, and arrived in this city on March 18th, 1878, after having delivered a few lectures in Sydney, on her way from America.

A series of lectures, on Sunday and Thursday evenings, extending over a period of twelve weeks, had been delivered in Melbourne, when an article attacking Spiritualism, and of such a character as to call for a reply, appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. Mrs. Britten was requested to give this reply in the form of a lecture, which was done on Sunday evening, June 9th, and which forms the substance of the following pages.

It may be remarked, that the attendance at the Opera House on successive Sunday evenings has been very large ; so much so, that not only has every seat and all standing-room been occupied, but a large number of persons have had to leave the building in consequence of their inability to find accommodation. On the evening on which the following lecture was delivered, the building was densely

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crowded by a respectable audience, and the favour with which the lecture was received, was manifested in the repeated and expressive tokens of approval given by the audience during its delivery and at its close.

We may venture to add, that although in some instances the "Press" has favourably noticed Mrs. Britten's lectures, there has also been a manifest disposition in other cases to throw around her lectures, and those with whom she is identified, comments of such a character as would be likely to bring into contempt the teachings thus enunciated, were it not that society at the present day is becoming more just and discriminating in its judgment, and more charitable in its verdict. The present unsettled state of opinion on all matters of a religious character, impels a very large number of persons to inquire into the merits of the new teachings; and to such persons the lectures of Mrs. Britten have indeed proved "a light shining in the darkness." It is hoped that, although the following lecture partakes largely of the character of a reply to the aspersion cast upon Mrs. Britten's teachings by the *Telegraph*, that its readers will find very much in it calculated to aid them in the inquiry as to "what is truth" in its relation to Spiritualism.

Mrs. Britten, in response to the numerous inquiries of friends, has prepared a little volume, entitled "On the Road; or, The Spiritual Investigator," giving a great deal of valuable information in a small compass; and this work, which forms an appropriate handbook for the investigation of Spiritualism, is now ready, and may be purchased of the publisher of this lecture, or of the booksellers in Melbourne.

*June, 1878.*

## INVOCATION.

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OH Thou, who art our light, and life, and strength, and our Salvation! Father in Heaven, God of all Creation! Humbly and reverently we invoke thy presence and the aid of thy ministering angels here this night. Thou who dost make the very stones thy preachers, and all nature's mute but varied forms thy gospel! Thou who hast written thy power and majesty in the shining scriptures of the skies, thy wisdom in the sand-grains, thy bounty throughout the realms of all creation, give us, this night, the daily bread of spirit! Inspire us, strengthen, aid us! Give thy ministering spirits charge around us. Let them move these faltering lips to declare thy purposes, and speak those truths fittest for Thee to give, and us to receive! To Thee, oh Infinite and Eternal One! we dedicate the counsels of this hour.

FRIENDS,—Before entering upon the subject announced for this evening's discourse, it becomes necessary that I should state the circumstances under which that subject was called for.

It is well known to you that I am at present engaged in this city to represent the religious opinions not only of the society who conduct these meetings, but also those of a large and respectable

body of persons, all of whom have received a series of gross insults through the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, which, in its issue of June 1st, publishes a leading article on the subject of Spiritualism, to the calumnious terms of which I am called upon by my Spiritualistic associates to reply in this evening's address.

On my own behalf, and in the name of those I represent, I beg to state that the protest I have to offer is not induced by any respect for the *Daily Telegraph*, or the author of its offensive leading article. I have not the slightest expectation that the statements in question will have any weight with such of the public as we *do* respect, or would ever be remembered, except for the notoriety which the review of this evening may afford them ; but those who have followed the course of addresses given from this platform during the past three months will understand, that the belief here promulgated recognizes amongst its most essential features, the principles of truth, justice, and the rights of conscience. These principles have been grossly invaded by the article complained of. These principles are trampled under foot when the Press, the people's organ, and representative of the people's rights and privileges, perverts its opportunities of reaching the public ear to the purposes of polemical discussion, and makes its columns the medium of sectarian vituperation against special items of religious belief.

That I may not be misunderstood in respect to the grounds of complaint at issue, I ask leave to offer such a definition of the functions which I conceive to belong to the Press, as will justify my present protest against its action.

To my apprehension, two of the most important elements of public opinion are entrusted to the guidance of the Church and the Press. To the Church

and its ministers belong all the problems which affect man's religious nature.

To regulate and guide religion and morals, clerical institutions have been established, and clerical officials are paid and supported. Had an attack on my religious belief therefore emanated from any of the pulpits of the land, however widely I might have differed from my assailant, and deemed it my duty to rebut his arguments, I should still have recognized it as proceeding from a legitimate source ; indeed, I should have congratulated myself, and the world at large, on the unwonted fidelity of the clerical shepherd who thus manifested his zeal for the spiritual welfare of his flock. On the other hand, the functions of the journalistic Press, as I, a plain cosmopolitan, understand them, are to chronicle all the noteworthy events of the day ; to record and comment upon the status of politics, finance, and commerce ; to give publicity, in short, to all that affects the people's secular interests in every department of national life.

From this category I do not mean to exclude the records of such events, or items of interest, as occur in the religious world. If any reverend divine succeeds in attracting large gatherings of the people to his ministry, or treats them to stirring views of their religious duties or moral responsibilities, these would be items of such *rare* and remarkable interest, that it would be the legitimate office of the Press to record them. As items of news, and records of passing events, these publications are really within the domain of Press reports ; but if the publishers were to launch out in praise or blame of the said utterances, complain on the one hand that they were destitute of interest, on the other, that they were too redolent of *fiery* zeal or *burning* enthusiasm, I submit that their strictures would be just as much out of place as if a right reverend prelate commented

on the current price of stocks, or a venerable deacon gave a critical sermon on the graces of the last opera singer. To illustrate my position still more definitely, let me present you with two simply hypothetical cases. Supposing that the Rev. John Smith, in passing through the city streets, should encounter a poor man being carried to the hospital for the purpose of having an injured or diseased leg amputated. The Rev. John Smith, remembering the charge of his Master—to wit, “The works that I do, ye shall do likewise,” &c., &c., together with divers other Apostolic commands to follow after Christ, and heal the sick—stops the sufferer, and, in the name of his Master, bids him take up his bed and walk : in other words, he proves his faith in the founder of his religion, by obeying his commands, and effecting what the Christian world would call a “miraculous cure.”

Now, do you not realize that the obvious duty of the Press in such a case would be to report this deeply interesting event? Of course it would ; and the more *rare* the occurrence, the more sure the Press would be to publish it abroad. In fact, I am free to say, the reason why the columns of the Press throughout the Christian world do not abound with records of this kind, is solely due to the fact that they seldom or never occur, or that the Rev. John Smiths, in general, have not faith enough in their “Divine Master” to furnish the Press with such interesting items of news.

Supposing again, that the inhabitants of some great city were suffering from want of pure water to drink, and, in view of this calamitous condition, an angel were to point out to the Rev. James Jones where a fine fresh spring of water was to be found. The Rev. James Jones follows the angel’s directions, finds the spring, and relieves his suffering fellow-citizens.

Now, who questions that, provided such a phenomenon as this ever did occur, every public journal throughout the lands of Christendom would record it? Every well-informed person will answer me in the affirmative; and I have only to complete my illustration by showing that the duty of the Press begins with making the record as an item of very rare and very interesting news, but it ends where comments on the performer's religious beliefs enter upon the scene. For example:—The Rev. John Smith may be a Presbyterian, and open up the kingdom of heaven only to the elect, excluding its benefits to all outsiders; whilst the Rev. James Jones may be a Baptist, and deem heaven attainable only on the condition of total immersion in the water of baptism. The articles of Christian faith are very numerous and very diverse, and, as I have repeatedly shown you from this platform, are liable to get considerably entangled in secular methods of dealing with them. The special functions of the Press then—no less than their special safety—would be in recording the facts, but in letting the actors' religion alone. What right would any journalist have to insist that the sufferer's leg ought not to have been healed, unless the Rev. Smith had been a Baptist instead of a Presbyterian? or that the Rev. Jones ought not to have been angel led, unless he had been a Presbyterian instead of a Baptist? I am inclined to think that every experienced journalist—especially if he is a prudent, as well as a candid man—will appreciate the force of this position, and agree with me that, whilst the *facts* of these cases—provided they ever did occur—essentially belonged to the Press, the doctrinal opinions of the performers could form no legitimate subject for journalistic consideration. To make my case still plainer, grant me yet the indulgence of a few more prefatory remarks, and follow me whilst I reverse these posi-



tions, and that by dealing with facts rather than hypotheses.

Mr. Chas. Partridge, an eminent merchant of New York City, America, happened to fall from a carriage, some ten or twelve years ago, and injured the "tendon Achilles" of one of his legs. Violent inflammation having succeeded this accident, the worst consequences were threatened, and amputation was pronounced necessary. Dr. J. R. Newton, of Rhode Island, being at that time on a visit to the city, Mr. Partridge called upon him, and in his capacity as a medium for spirit-healing, Dr. Newton laid his hands on the afflicted member, and restored it in a few minutes to a condition of perfect health and soundness. As Mr. Partridge occupied a very prominent position before the public, as a New York merchant, the nature and serious extent of his accident had been made widely known through the Press of the city; but when Mr. Partridge himself called on the editors of the various journals, and offered to back up his own testimony with that of hundreds of his Spiritualistic associates who were cognizant both of the affliction and its instantaneous mode of cure, Mr. Partridge failed to find one single journalist who would give his statement a place in his columns; and, though his religion as a Spiritualist was at that very time being made the subject of the most unmitigated vituperation and misrepresentation, his facts, and records of phenomena, were scornfully refused, on the grounds that they would "only serve to advertise a quack doctor." For my second parallel, let me remind those of my hearers who are familiar with our own special records, how, some few years ago, the inhabitants of the great city of Chicago, in the State of Illinois, America, suffered for want of pure water to drink; and how one, Abraham James, a spiritual medium, was instructed

by a spirit where and how to find an artesian well, that would supply the suffering people with the much needed desideratum. — Abraham James, spirit led, found the artesian well, and the city was supplied in consequence with the pure water thus discovered. I do not remember a single western journal that did not record the fact of Chicago's great need of water ; but I 'ave searched long, and fruitlessly, to find any item explanatory of the mode by which it was eventually supplied.

Abraham James, the spirit medium, has shown me many a Press editorial invoking the wrath of Heaven against his impious belief in the ministry of angels ; but not a single journalistic paragraph could he supply our own spiritual Press with, recording the mode in which the angels ministered to a suffering community through his mediumship. Having now illustrated, both by hypothesis and fact, what I humbly conceive to be the duty of the Press, and the derelict modes in which that duty may be evaded, my candid listeners will be all the better prepared to understand that it is neither the *Daily Telegraph* nor its editorial representative whose action I this night complain of. I plead only for the principle of justice, and claim that the editor of a people's newspaper is the representative of the people's right to have a fair and truthful record of every item of interest which occurs in their midst, but not to have their religious beliefs judged by the editor's doctrinal standard, or insulted by his bigotry.

I shall now proceed to quote from the article so often referred to, the special passages which form the grounds of this evening's address. The first item reads thus :—' One of the most curious and painful phenomena of the day is the tendency of some minds to retrograde towards a condition of barbarism and savagery ; for while science, ever progressing, is con-

tinually amassing fresh evidences of the uniformity, universality, and perfection of the divine law, we find numbers of men and women surrendering themselves to the thrall of a superstition—that of Spiritualism, which belongs essentially to savage modes of thought. As Professor Tyler has pointed out—‘The modern medium is merely a Red Indian or a Tartar Schaman, in a dress coat or petticoats, as the case may be.’”

The first perusal of these paragraphs would suggest the idea that their author could not by any possibility be a Christian, seeing that he commences by dwelling upon the evidences which the age affords of the “uniformity, universality, and perfection of the divine law,” utterly forgetful that the entire system of Christianity is based upon the assumption that all the events upon which its existence rests, are universally claimed to be suspensions of the “divine law,” infractions of its entire working; in a word, supernatural infringements upon all the known and acknowledged order of “divine law.” It may be urged that the passages quoted above do not attack Christianity, but Spiritualism. I deny this *in toto*. All religions upon the face of the earth, Christianity included, claim to be revelations, claim spirits and angels as the revelators, and spiritual gifts, powers, and phenomena as the means of revelation. The charge of infraction of “the divine law,” no less than that of “barbarism” and “savagery,” applied to Spiritualism, will apply with equal force to the Hindoo Vedas, the Persian Zend-Avesta, the Hebrew Talmud, and the Arabian Koran. It will sweep its way through the covers of the Bible; assail every momentous incident recorded in the Old and New Testaments; label the history of Christ and his Apostles with the choice epithets of “barbarism” and “savagery;” and take away the spiritual foundations upon which every sect of Christianity rests its claim for

authority. Without Spiritualism, there is not a single form of authoritative religion upon the face of the earth ; with it, all religious believers are obnoxious to this mighty critic's denunciation of "barbarism and savagery."

The great journalist next goes on to say :—" All the manifestations are so many survivals of savage practices and savage beliefs, and the so-called new religion is nothing more or less than a relapse into barbarism."

Now, as an item of news, this paragraph may read very well ; for, I will venture to say, out of the millions of believers in the facts of spirit communion who crowd the cities of modern civilization, there is not one to whom the announcement that their simple modes of communicating with their spirit friends are "survivals of savage practices" will not be a statement as novel as it is untrue. What have the Spiritualists done to merit such an assertion ? In what modes of their communion does the "savagery" come in ? The only practices through which they have ever yet been able to realize the blessings of communion with their spirit friends, have been by sitting quietly down to wait for whatever signs or tokens the communicating spirits could give ; but, whether they sit alone or in numbers, in silence or cheerful conversation, they practise no acts, resort to no artifices ; in a word, just do nothing but discipline their spirits to harmony, and their manners to gentleness, in order to receive those messages of love and purity which our great censor stigmatizes as "savage practices," and "savage beliefs."

Had we drawn our examples from "God's holy word," and our methods of invoking spirits from those "men of God" who are held up to our children as patterns of piety and godliness, we might indeed have deserved the critical rebuke of the *people's*

*teachers.* For example : Supposing one of our spirit mediums were to be possessed by the spirit of Abraham, and deem himself called upon to offer up his only son as a burnt-offering, or propitiatory sacrifice, to a burning-flesh loving God ! Supposing we were to obey the commandment of Moses' God, and stone our children to death when they were disobedient, or inflict the same civilized mode of punishment to those who should be found picking up sticks on the Sabbath day ! Should the spirit of Elisha possess us, we might be found psychologizing bears to come out of the woods and destroy all the poor little street children who called us ugly names. As for the spirits of Joshua, Samuel, and Samson, with such inspirations working in our midst, neither men, women, children, cattle, or horses would stand a chance against us.

Even if we should happen to be influenced by the unwarlike prophets, we fear we should scarcely escape the critical lash of the *Daily Telegraph's* great oracle. Fancy any one amongst our mediums running, like Isaiah, naked and barefoot, for three years, as a sign to some modern Israel ! Picture to ourselves a new Jeremiah, binding himself about with a girdle, and then taking and hiding it in a hole in the rock until it was marred, and then displaying it to the people as a sign of what they were to come to, if they were not obedient to the laws of their God ! How, if the spirit of Ezekiel should possess a man, induce him to lay on his left side for three hundred and ninety days, eat strange and very disgusting food, and draw pictures of the nation's destruction on a tile ; and, when that was done, turn over on his right side, lay on that for forty days, and then attribute all his eccentric doings to the Lord ! Supposing any of our modern mediums were to dance in the costume and fashion of that Biblical man of God—King David—with scanty

garments, and harp in hand, before the cabinets of our spirit mediums, what would the mighty Melbourne oracle say to such terpsichorean performances? What, indeed, would he say to any modern imitators of the sacred examples which modern Christians celebrate as articles of their religious faith, less than the terms "savage practices" and "barbarous beliefs?" Consistency is indeed a jewel! and so long as our model censor can hear these, and scores of similar histories, read out every Sunday as items of the Christian faith, and fail to stigmatize them as "survivals of savage practices" and "savage beliefs," I can scarcely understand why he is so hard upon parties of ladies and gentlemen who sit in pleasant parlours and decent attire, listening to messages of love and good advice from their own beloved friends and kindred from the other side of the river.

The next charge against us reads thus:—"Science, which, as Bacon has said, 'is the word of God revealed in facts,' demonstrates the invariability of natural law. Spiritualism denies this point blank, and professes to believe that the law of gravitation is capable of being suspended; that material substances can be transported from place to place by immaterial agencies; that what is incorporeal can be transformed into a corporeal body by spiritualistic sleight of hand; that disembodied minds, *which are, therefore, destitute of organs, and incapable of communicating or receiving* sensorial impressions, can hold intercourse with embodied minds; and that Spiritualism can lift cats in the air by invisible hands."

The passages just quoted are remarkable in two respects. The first is—for the gross misrepresentation of one of the most essential points of Spiritualistic belief; to wit, that Spiritualists deny "point blank" that invariability of natural law, which Bacon affirms. So far from this being true, they affirm that no

phenomena ever occurred, either in ancient or modern times, which were not in accordance with natural law. They believe some at least of the so-called miracles of antiquity, because they find their parallel to-day, and can resolve them now, as heretofore, into the action of natural law. I am not aware that the Spiritualists ever do lift cats in the air by invisible hands, but they presume that the same power that caught up Philip the Apostle, and carried him from Gaza to Azotus, could, and does, carry equally heavy bodies through the air to this day. As to the suspension of the law of gravitation, no Spiritualist ever yet made any pretence to believe in such an absurdity. The Spiritualist's constant aphorism has been, "No law of Nature can be suspended, nor does one law ever contradict another." If I lay these blossoms down (dropping her bouquet on the table), they will remain there until they perish, but they will never raise themselves, or overcome the law of gravitation which holds them in their place. If I raise them thus (lifting the flowers in her hand), is not the force I bring to bear upon them the action of a mechanical law, rather than the suspension of gravitation? If, as a spirit clothed in matter, I can bring mechanical force to bear upon this table, why, as a spirit freed from matter, can I not operate in the same way and by the aid of forces as appropriate to my state as a disembodied spirit, as muscular action is appropriate to my state as an embodied spirit? But you will reply, you forget that the oracle of the modern Press informs you, "Spirits are destitute of organs, and incapable of receiving or communicating sensorial impressions."

Truly, this is, indeed, a Daniel come to judgment, and, at last, we have the Press representing itself in its true light by communicating to us an *item of news!* "News," however, is hardly the word which defines

this wonderful and startling piece of intelligence. "Spirits are destitute of organs," are they? Then why, in the name of all the fabulists that ever lived and flourished, cannot this *Telegraph* Solon inform us what it is that has organs and does communicate and receive sensorial impressions? It certainly cannot be the body, for those who have ever seen the man—one moment communicating and receiving sensorial impressions, and, in the next, by a mere prick of a dagger's point, the blow of a bullet, or the entrance of a grain of poison, lie a helpless clod of dust and ashes at our feet—*know* that the man is no longer an organism, or the cranial bones and medullary contents of the lifeless head an instrument for the communication of sensorial impressions. If this great critic does not know that the spirit is the man, and that the spirit carries with it beyond the grave all the organic power and sensorial power which made it man whilst yet in the flesh, then he is in no position to argue the case with those who do know the fact; and the sooner he goes to the spirit circle and convinces himself of this truth, the sooner he will be ashamed of the materialistic ignorance which attributes organic or vital power, in any degree, to matter rather than to spirit. Our critic next says:—"Professor Tyndall divided the promoters of spiritual phenomena into two classes, 'one of which needs no demonstration, while the other is beyond the reach of proof;' and he adds:—"It is in vain that impostors are exposed and the special demon cast out. He has but to slightly change his shape, return to his house, and find it swept and garnished."

We had thought Professor Tyndall's opinions were disposed of long ago; and that, having been convicted of falsehood, insolence, and faithlessness to his duty, as a professed interpreter of natural phenomena, the shadows of his wholly unsustained denials con-



cerning what he knew nothing about, would scarcely be ripped up at this late day as proof against well established facts.

In the early days of the spiritual movement, Professors Tyndall, Faraday, and others of the same calibre of mind, were invited to investigate the phenomena. Finding that it presented features of strangeness they could not explain, in their egotistical fear of losing caste as authorities, they attempted to blot out by rude denial, or illogical contempt, the marvels they could not explain. It is in such a despair of science as this, that the great Professor and his devoted admirer of the *Daily Telegraph* attempt to divide the ranks of Spiritualism into "those who need no demonstration, and those who are beyond the reach of proof." Professor Tyndall, and his follower, forget to inform us to which class they belong. Either or both would fairly represent them; and, in the meantime, who are those they thus sneeringly insult? Not alone the humble exponent of the faith who stands before you, nor yet the numerous and respectable body of citizens whose opinions she represents in this place; but they include many of the crowned heads, princes, potentates, and nobles of Europe; professors of geology, astronomy, and all the other natural sciences; writers and journalists—almost as eminent as the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*—doctors, lawyers, magistrates, schoolmen, ladies and gentlemen, peers and peasants, by the hundreds, thousands, and millions.

To those who care only for the authority of great names, a long list of the notables who, in Europe, America, and other parts of the civilized world, have embraced Spiritualism, was published a few months ago in the *Banner of Light*, and can easily be referred to. To those who pin their faith upon the authority of numbers the religious statistics of the

American Catholics, returning the number of American Spiritualists at eleven millions, may afford some evidence of the masses whom Professor Tyndall and the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* set up their opinions against. To all who realize any value in the collective worth of public opinion, it certainly must become a strange spectacle, and not one calculated to inspire much respect or confidence, to see one individual who happens to have the command of a column in a daily newspaper, denouncing millions of his fellow-creatures as "barbarians," and "savages," because they do not happen to coincide with him in matters of religious opinion, and likening thousands and tens of thousands of harmless persons, quiet and inoffensive ladies and gentlemen, to "Red Indians" and "Tartar Schamans," because they believe their friends and kindred can speak to them through a spiritual telegraph, as well as an electro-galvanic one. If this writer's pet Professors had likened King David dancing before the Ark, or Samuel hewing Agag in pieces before the altar of his God, to "Red Indians" and "Tartar Schamans," an impartial judge might have deemed the Indians and Tartars had the worst of the comparison; but whilst the great journalist is totally silent on the recital of such savage practices and savage beliefs, read every Sabbath day in our churches as good specimens of religion, the scientific experiments of a Crookes, a Hare, a Varley, and a Wallace entitle them, and all the millions who sympathize with them in Spiritualistic belief, to rank only with "Red Indians" and "Tartar Schamans."

The next point of attack is made against spiritual revelations, especially the practice of labelling communications, which the writer denounces with all the ugly words his bitter imagination can furnish forth,

with the authorship of great names. On this point, at least, I clasp hands with our critic, and remind my hearers, especially those who have known and followed my career in public as well as private in connexion with Spiritualism, how often and earnestly I have pleaded against this sycophantic attempt to imitate the vice of the age—namely, that of depending upon the authority of great names. Does the abuse which our great critic heaps upon us become any the more endurable because he presumes to do it on the authority of Professors Tyler and Tyndall? I know it is the vice of the age; I know, even now, that the worst and most savage doctrines of sectarianism are endured by civilized men and women, chiefly because they are handed down the ages under the proscriptive authority of great names. For my Spiritualistic associates, in this respect, I can well afford to suffer rebuke, for they have laid themselves open to its reception. All I can say is, the Spiritualists, like other persons of this age, have been so accustomed to hear the worst of crimes and the most palpably savage doctrines sanctioned by a “thus saith the Lord,” that they have not yet learned to shake themselves free from the trammels which the tyrant—Custom—has bound about them, and give truth for truth’s sake, without resorting to the popular method of endorsing folly and imbecility with the contemptible shield of authoritative names.

In proof of the abominations into which Spiritualists are betrayed by this all too popular vice of worshipping authority, this writer, quoting from the *Banner of Light*, adds:—“*Whilst the late Dr. Channing is made to utter some profane babble to the effect that Jesus of Nazareth was a natural son of Mary, and that his father was Caiaphas, the High-Priest.*” As the question of *profanity* depends entirely upon what Christians profess to believe or deny, so the profanity

of this sentence must depend on whether Christianity claims the assertions therein made, to be true or false.

As every Christian nation under the sun not only acknowledges that Jesus *was* the natural son of Mary, but the whole fabric of Christianity rests on this assertion, so the entire charge of profanity must be based on the second statement—namely, that his father was Caiaphas, the High-Priest.

Now, without having the slightest sympathy with either statement, both being merely the opinions of those who cannot have any means of determining their truth, I would ask—Since the entire foundations of Christianity are based on the assumption that Jesus *was* the natural son of Mary, what would be necessary to convert the rest of the sentence from “profane babble” into “sacred doctrine?” Simply, the omission of the High-Priest’s name, and the substitution, in its place, of the awful, majestic, and almost inconceivable name of *the Almighty*, even of the *Supreme Being*, the Deity, whose stupendous existence can only be compassed in the blind, powerless words—the UNKNOWN and UNKNOWABLE! There would be no “profane babble” in associating the creative power of the universe, the Infinite and Eternal One, with a story which will not bear repetition in modern language, just as it is no profanity to travestie that awful name in connection with a history which, if enacted in our own time, and amidst the population of any civilized community, would stamp its actors with the character of hopeless lunatics, or unpardonable blasphemers!

The next subject of attack is a book of visions, published by Judge Edmonds, of which this writer says:—“According to Judge Edmonds, spirits possess a material nature. They eat and drink, they wear clothing, and have to shelter their bodies from the sun

and storm; they go to bed, and fall asleep. They occupy earth—tangible, positive earth—and there are spirit animals in some of the spheres, as also, we presume, abattoirs, butchers' shops," &c., &c.

The visions of Judge Edmonds, like those of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and other famous vision seers of olden time, may, or may not, be purely allegorical, or absolutely real.

As we don't believe Ezekiel's "wheels" and "living creatures," Daniel's man of metals and clay, or John's Apocalyptic serpents, scarlet women, black and white horses, &c., &c., have any actual existence in heaven, so it is quite possible Swedenborg's curious views of life in the "World of Spirits," and Judge Edmonds's wanderings in the spheres, may be representations of just such scenes as we behold nightly in our dreams, when we eat, drink, walk, talk, and live in imaginary worlds of being, as unreal to the bodily senses as they are real in all their details to the spirit. We know nothing of the spirit world but what spirits tell us; nothing of spiritual existence but what our own spirits can spiritually discern. More than a thousand years ago, St. Augustine asked a materialistic dreamer with what senses he heard, saw, and felt, in dreams, whilst his body lay slumbering in some distant place. We might well ask the same question to-night, and if we did not KNOW the fact of our dual existence, and realize that our spirits must be participating in spiritual scenes, whenever they have a consciousness apart from the body, we might, at least, infer this possibility, from the vivid experiences of dream-life.

Making all due allowance, then, for the possibility that the visions of Judge Edmonds may have been allegorical representations of the spirit world only, our next question is—What do the returning spirits of humanity tell us of the soul's condition hereafter? Not in one place, but in hundreds—not through the

mediumship of one individual, but through that of thousands, spirits affirm that their states are as various as their conditions of moral good or evil, or their intellectual fitness for graduated spheres of being. In some spheres, the purified soul attains to states that need no sustenance, rest, or refreshment; but, rising above all earthly conditions, they dwell under circumstances inconceivable to mortals, whose experiences are limited to mortality only. In other spheres, the yet undeveloped soul finds itself chained to earthly conditions, because it has no higher attractions.

As these bodies of ours are vitalized only by spiritual essence, so this earth and all that it contains is vitalized and permeated by spirit spheres. The soul-world is as necessary to the inorganic realms of being as to the organic; and if there were not an unseen universe to sustain, vitalize, and build up the seen, matter would have no existence at all. The spirit spheres are the realms of *force*, in their relation to matter; hence this earth is an organic structure only, because it is permeated by its appropriate spirit spheres. The next spheres of being to this earth, then, must necessarily be a reflex of all that is in and upon it; and here dwell those earth-bound spirits who, through vice, crime, ignorance, or lack of spiritual culture, are not fit to quit the earth, or rise above its rudimental attractions. "In my Father's house are many mansions," said the great Teacher of Nazareth; and however it may excite the mirth and provoke the sneers of such highly-spiritualized natures as the writer under review, to find there are spirit spheres which form the exact counterpart of this earth, and that those who are not fit for higher conditions will dwell therein, we would rather depend on the *ipse dixit* of millions of spirit friends who are in the experiences of what they describe, than the opinions of a writer who does

not even know that "spirits have organs," or "are capable of giving or receiving sensorial impressions." "In my Father's house are many mansions" is a phrase which finds a far better illustration in the many spheres appropriate to the many graduated conditions of human nature, than in the savage superstition which teaches of a great white throne, surrounded by a choir of eternally psalm-singing Christians, whose only variety of occupation is to rejoice in the delectable sight of all souls that have not believed in their creeds—ever dying, yet ever living—in eternal torments and unquenchable fire.

And now I fulfil the most grateful part of my mission, by introducing the closing item of this pitiful and ill-conditioned article. It is as follows :—"Sane men and women, as they reflect upon the ludicrous phenomena and grotesque manifestations of Spiritualism, will be little disposed to accept of such a savage superstition as a new *cultus*, but will be inclined to reflect the words of Robert Browning, in his 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium' :—

' Such intimate way,  
Close converse, frank exchange of offices,  
Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great  
With the infinitely small, betokened here  
By a course of omens, raps, and sparks.  
How does it suit the dread traditional text  
Of the great and terrible name ?  
Shall the heaven of heavens stoop to such child's play ? ' "

It is by no means a pleasing nor elevating feature of human nature, that which attempts to graft its own petty proclivities, and narrow prejudices, upon some great cause, in the hope of shielding the littleness of the man beneath the magnitude of the movement. The image-makers of Ephesus gave the world some pretty good illustrations of this position some eighteen centuries ago. When they found the Apostles of

Christ preaching a doctrine opposed to their trade in image-making, without the slightest interest in that doctrine, or the least care whether it was good or bad, they found it expedient to cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Now, profiting by the information I have received, I am not surprised to find the author of the article this night reviewed, imitating the example of the Ephesian image-makers, and raising a war-cry against that, which he may have too much reason to believe in, provided it suited his worldly interest to do so; still I marvel that the writer who backs up his main positions with a Tyler and a Tyndall, can find no better support for his final charge, than a confused string of verbiage from the pen of Robert Browning, an author whose animus in abusing Spiritualism was as notorious in English literary circles, as the object of the Ephesian image-makers was amongst their rivals. Lest the value of Mr. Robert Browning's testimony may not be fully appreciated, however, permit me to supply the main facts under which the *sublime* passages quoted by the *Telegraph* editor were supposed to be written.

Mrs. Browning, the celebrated authoress of "Aurora Leigh," became a warm Spiritualist through the instrumentality of Mr. D. D. Home's mediumship. As the husband of the sweet poetess conceived a violent antipathy for his wife's faith, he resorted to the very general, but not very logical, weapons of ridicule and abuse, in order to revenge himself upon the author of her conversion; hence the poem whose bitter and magniloquent utterances our critic launches at our head as the culminating means of overthrow.

In this, as in former instances, we are indebted to our assailant for valuable texts rather than crushing arguments. Who is this that represents a God of the "immeasurably great," forgetful that he is also the God of the "infinitely small?" Who is this that



brates of the God of suns, stars, and systems, yet omits to record his creative power in the manufacture of sand-grains and dew-drops? The "dread and terrible name" may not be used in connexion with the messages by which kind angels minister to their bereaved friends on earth, but his stupendous personality may be conceived of, as incarnated in the person of a little wailing babe, born under circumstances that would not admit of recital in plain language. His divine providence may not permit our spirit-fathers and mothers to make use of telegraphic "sparks and raps" as a means of signalling to us the joyful facts of their continued existence; yet this inspired apologist for the "divine nature" has no word of contempt for the character of Deity, when his glory is first manifested on earth by converting the contents of a few water-pots into wine!

In a word, it suited Mr. Robert Browning to spite his gentle wife, by writing a diatribe against her religion; and it suits the editor of the *Telegraph* to quote that diatribe, when he can find no better arguments for his purpose.

From this platform, friends, I devoted two months of my engagement in various addresses, explanatory of the doctrines and principles of my religion. When my audiences themselves chose the subject, they demanded, voted for, and obtained, plain and historically correct definitions of the popular religion of the day—Christianity. It is a part of the mission of Spiritualism to illuminate all the dark places and dark things of earth, and as Spiritualism is the science of life, so there is nothing which concerns human welfare which is not a legitimate theme to consider and analyze, from a spiritual standpoint.

More than this;—if the statements of every returning spirit—no matter in what part of the world, or through what methods of telegraphy the communi-

cation be given—are true, and every soul is in the exact condition of happiness or misery in the hereafter, which its deeds have earned in mortal life ; if there is no forgiveness, or extenuation for sin, and every believer in vicarious atonement for sin finds himself miserably deluded when he enters the spheres of spiritual existence, then does it become the bounden duty of every advocate of the spiritual philosophy to proclaim its doctrines, without respect to the blame or praise of men.

If the conditions of life hereafter be such as the spirits represent, the contradictory and incomprehensible affirmations of Christian teachers on this point must be false.

The statements of the opposing faiths are wholly at variance with each other. Might it not be more worthy of religious propagandists, if the Christians were to meet our facts with more stringent arguments than abuse, and better logic than rude denial ?

Confident that I stand on the authority of a truth which will one day be worshipped as slavishly as it is now decried ignorantly, I can afford to watch and wait God's own good time of growth and blossoming. I conclude by assuring all who listen to me, that I shall scatter the seed entrusted to me with no sparing hand, and though my human nature may shrink from the tempests which controversial bigotry and ignorance raise up against me, and my heart would far more gladly expand in fraternal kindness than harsh antagonism even to my enemies, I shall fulfil the duty imposed upon my spirit in its solemn and responsible relations to the Great Spirit, relying upon the assurance that where God is on our side, and the word of truth on our lips, we have nothing to fear from what man can do against us. And now, friends, the case it has been my duty to lay before you is closed—the work of the hour is done.

In giving this address, I have not been moved by any animus against the writer of the article reviewed, although I have good cause to believe he has personal reasons for his hostility to the faith he insults. Whatever may have been his motives for the attack, the ground of my defence has been my respect for the principles of truth, justice, and religious liberty. My aim has been to show you where the line of demarcation between the functions of the Press and the Church should be drawn. If I am correct, I not only have the right, but it becomes my duty, on my own behalf and that of my Spiritualistic associates, to protest against any attempt on the part of the Press to fetter our rights of conscience, by insulting our religious belief. In speaking of the Press in general terms, I must not be understood to carry my special cause of complaint beyond the solitary case this night reviewed. The duties of the Press I have defined upon general principles. The infraction of those principles by a representative of the order, compels me to make my protest upon the same general principles. The writer of the offensive article, *as an individual*, commands no more respect from me than the authors of any anonymous communications whose lucubrations I always commit unread to the flames.

I cannot close without acknowledging that I make this protest with all the more regret because the liberal spirit of the age is fast outgrowing its necessity. The time was, as I have shown, when the Press in general, inverted the plain order of their duty, persistently refusing to report our facts and phenomena, but equally persistently disgracing their columns by vituperation against our religion. During the last ten years a change has come over the spirit of the scene, and I am happy to record my belief that the editor of any public journal who would descend to

personal abuse, or denounce the religion of millions of his fellow-creatures as "a savage belief," or relic of "barbarism," is the exception, rather than the rule, of respectable journalism. Although we might honour and respect our Press far more if its conductors had the courage to assume their legitimate position, and bravely lead, instead of blindly following in the wake of popular feeling, we must either accord to the Press a growing sentiment of liberality, or assume that they are moving on with the liberality of the age; for, take it as a whole, the Press are as unconservative to the great new movement of Spiritualism as—in all probability—their interests will permit. Personally, I know that many of their best and noblest minds are with us; collectively, I can wish them no higher boon than the power to break the tyrannical chains, which custom has hung around their freedom of utterance.

For any of my Spiritualistic friends who may be present, I have neither words of warning nor encouragement to offer them. Public opinion, the Press, and the Church, with all its combined forces, can do nothing to disturb the balance of those minds who have successfully overcome the fear of the "last dread enemy;" who know the fact, as well as the conditions of their own eternal existence, and who can join alike their friends on earth and in heaven, in shouting the triumphant pæan of immortality—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"