

which they have witnessed for themselves, and which have wrung from them an unwilling belief.

Let no man deceive himself by saying, This is fancy's sketch. The evidence is at hand and all around us. He who runs may read it, and he must be blind indeed who does not see it.

2. That we are not by death separated from those whom we have loved on earth, but that during our life they are ever around us and ministering to us, and that by our purity of life we may be re-united with them, is also equally demonstrated. How often have I witnessed this! How often have I had it communicated to me from others! Had it been manifested in my own case alone, I might have thought less of it. But I have seen it so frequently with others! Nay, I have rarely seen it otherwise, and it has indeed been frequent that the heart of the mourner has been comforted by the consciousness from which there was no escaping, that the loved ones whose loss has been mourned have been "drawn back by the cords of love and hovered around his pillow, breathed in his ear and wept upon his bosom, and gazed upon his soul and communed with his spirit."*

3. It has also been demonstrated what death is, and thus it has been robbed of the undefined and mysterious terrors which have been thrown around it, by those who have been more willing to appeal to the degrading passion of fear than the elevating sentiment of love.

And here it is worthy of remark, that whatever discrepancies may be otherwise found in the teachings of this new philosophy, upon this point there is no difference. Death is to the rational mind only "a phenomenon to be investigated, not a bugbear to frighten." To the pure and good it is but a continuance of existence, freed from the thousand ills of our material life, freed from the restraints which confine it to a single planet, and is a condition where the pure spirit is left to roam amid the universe of worlds, free to

* In *Appendix G* will be found one among many instances.

choose its abiding-place where the glory of the Godhead is most manifest.

4. It is demonstrated that our most secret thoughts can be known to and be revealed by the intelligence which is thus surrounding us and communing with us. I had heard in the course of my life a similar thought frequently uttered from the pulpit, but I confess I could not realize it. But now it comes in such a form that there is no room to question it. I can not doubt it if I would. I have myself been often startled, and have seen others shrink within themselves at the consciousness thus thrust upon them, that the very deepest deep of their hearts was thus known.

Here there can be no mistake. Each can see and judge for himself. And I advise no man to go into the investigation unless he is prepared to have the most secret recesses of his mind penetrated and laid bare to his own view, and perhaps to that of others; for so sure as the sun shines at mid-day, so sure will this conviction be wrought upon him, if he will but afford the opportunity.

And if this is so, can there be a more powerful barrier against the admission of impure thought? Can there be any greater incentive to purity, or any greater restraint upon impurity, than the thorough conviction of the reality of this knowledge, the conviction that the most concealed recesses of our hearts may thus be penetrated by those whom we have loved most on earth?

For my part, I confess I can conceive of none, and I have more than once witnessed its tremendous effects upon those on whom the conviction has been wrought, and to this it is that I mainly attribute the unquestionable fact that there is no thorough believer in Spiritualism who has not become a wiser and better man.

5. So, too, it is demonstrated that our conduct in this life, in a great measure, elaborates our destiny hereafter, and that our happiness in the next stage of existence depends not upon our adherence to this or that sectarian faith, but upon the purity of our life here, and our obedience according to

the lights we have to the great law of loving God and one another. It is no vicarious atonement which is to redeem us, but we are to work out our own salvation. Thus striking once and for aye a fatal blow at the pernicious doctrine which has so long tempted man to defer the day of repentance to a future time. *Now* is the accepted time. *Now* is the day of our salvation. And can there be aught more cheering and encouraging to the virtuous, amid the trials and vicissitudes of life, than the thorough and well-settled conviction that his future existence is to be happy or otherwise according to his conduct, which he can control, and not according to his faith, which he can not?

In connection with this, while on the one hand it holds out to the pure a never-ending and still-increasing happiness, so on the other it denounces against the willfully vicious, the hard, the cruel, the selfish, the worldly man, a condition of self and mutual torment more revolting than any material hell which man's imagination in its wildest flights ever painted.*

6. We are taught the grand doctrine of PROGRESSION, whereby we learn that as the soul of man is an emanation from the germ of the great First Cause, so its destiny is to return toward the source whence it sprang. That man, neither here nor in any future existence, is governed by miracle, but only by universal laws which were from the beginning and have no end, and in which there is no turning nor shadow of change; that in obedience to those laws man does not, on dying, become instantly changed into a state of perfection on the one hand, or of degradation on the other, nor is he condemned to a long and dreamless

* On one occasion it was said by what purported to be the spirit of one who had been executed for murder, who retained a very vivid recollection of the scene of his execution, rendered more horrible by his despair, by his reluctance to leave the world in which he said he had "led a jolly life," and by his intense hatred toward those through whose instrumentality he had been brought to his end, that far down in the gloomy regions where he had dwelt, his dark companions, mid shouts and laughter at his agony, had daily acted before him the terrible scene of his execution.

sleep of ages, but passes into a state of existence where the evils of his material life being thrown aside, he is more capable of entering upon and advancing in the great object of his creation; and that that object is Progression onward, upward toward perfection forever.

And, lastly, we are taught what is the state of existence into which man is ushered after the life on earth. As under the Mosaic dispensation mankind were taught the existence of one God, rather than the thousand gods with mortal attributes then worshiped, and as under the Christian dispensation they were taught the immortality of the soul and its existence forever, so now, under this new dispensation, it is being revealed to them, for the first time, what that state of existence is, and how in this life they may well and wisely prepare to enter upon that and make it either undescribably sorrowful or inexpressibly happy.

Such are the great truths which I have gleaned from my investigation of this most momentous subject, and I confess that I enter upon the task of laying them before my fellow-men with no ordinary fear and trembling, lest I may be unequal to the great task on which I have ventured, and may in my weakness mislead rather than wisely guide.

I have, however, this abiding consolation, that I am not speaking of matters which are revealed to me alone. I am not dwelling on things which come through channels which are accessible to me only, but in a matter which is open to all alike, which all may investigate and learn as I have, and where the means of correcting any error into which I may have fallen are within the reach of any one who will choose to examine for himself, with the same earnest and fearless desire for the truth which has actuated me. Nay, more! in which I am persuaded that as time rolls on, and man's true nature becomes more developed, increased facilities for investigation will be afforded, and such examinations will be made as will test the truth or falsehood of what I teach. In these thoughts I have indeed a solace, as they assure

me that I can not permanently injure where my only desire has been to do good.

But for my own part I will frankly confess that there has been wrought in my mind the thorough conviction that these revelations, so important to man, are indeed of God, and that they spring only from an earnest desire in an unseen intelligence "to open to the world the truths of another life; to aid in removing from the eyes of the willfully blind the scales of error, prejudice, and superstition; to give man a hope, which is not dependent on the denunciations of the priest, that there is a better life beyond the grave—a life in which the spirit unfolds its wings, and soars to regions where the Spirit of God is indeed manifest; to remove that fear which bows the stoutest heart, and renders the firmest mind a ready believer in the fallacies which are taught as God's revelation, and to bring all religion to one simple point, that God is indeed sufficient in himself to the perfection of that which is of himself."

Aside from the nature of the revelations themselves, and their entire coincidence with all of nature that we see around us, and aside from many considerations already mentioned, there are others which tend to produce this conviction in my mind.

As came the dispensation through Christ, so comes this, in a state of almost universal peace, when men's minds are at liberty to receive, to examine, and to understand it; in a state of great refinement and intellectual advancement, when human thought is fitted to investigate and comprehend it.

The former dispensation passed through a thousand years of darkness and superstition, and has emerged through an age of infidelity into one of inquiry more bold, more free, and more successful in diffusing knowledge among men than the world has ever seen; into one where truth is indeed free to combat error and all-powerful to overcome it.

Eighteen hundred years have rolled into the bosom of eternity, and millions of human beings have passed from

the earth, who have never heard of the doctrines of Christ, and there are now millions living on its surface who are equally ignorant.

Nay, more! there are millions yet living who have heard, but do not profess to believe. Throughout all Christendom, how few are there who believe, or live as if they believed, the pure and holy religion taught by Christ! But their souls long for something which shall satisfy the cravings that have sought consolation in vain amid the mysticism which meets them at every step.

The Christian world is divided into sects, and torn by internal dissensions, seeming to have no common platform but that of hatred toward each other.

The intelligent and educated classes are mostly—secretly or otherwise—led by the conflicting doctrines taught around them to be unbelievers.

There is now greater mental freedom throughout the earth than was ever known before in its history.

The discoveries in nature and in science which have marked this age above all others, while they have shaken the belief of many in the popular theology of the day, as expounded by some, have removed from men's minds the absurd ideas of supernaturalism which had so long cast its dark pall over them. They have done more; they have opened to his view a boundless universe of worlds, peopled by sentient beings, who, like him, must be candidates for immortality, and thus presented to his mind more just conceptions of the attributes of the great Creator of all.

The human mind thus prepared for its advent, this new dispensation comes to supply the want to the countless thousands who are now slumbering in indifference or toiling in infidelity; to teach man his origin, his duty, and his destiny; to convict him of his immortality, and instruct him how to make it happy; to open to his view the great doctrine of progression, involving an eternity of action, and the supremacy of his reason over the besetting propensities of his material nature; and to impress upon him forever

the precept to love God and his fellow. It comes not with the fagot and the sword, but with healing on its wings, at once the Redeemer and the Comfortor; not in a distant and subjugated province, but amid a mighty people, who are free to receive and embrace it; not to a few obscure men in lonely places, but everywhere broadcast throughout the whole civilized world, and among all classes; not to be taught covertly amid the caverns of the hills or the dens and vaults of imperial Rome, but openly in the face of God and man, challenging investigation; not asking a blind faith or dependence upon authority, but the exercise of man's most Godlike quality, his reason; not appealing to the base passion of fear, but to the ennobling sentiment of love; not to destroy, but to save; not to punish, but to redeem; not to sow discord and build up sects, but to heal the divisions among the followers of the lowly Jesus, and afford a common platform on which all may assemble.

Thus it comes, with its Nicodemuses privately and in the night time, asking how these things can be; perhaps, too, with its Peters to deny, and its Judases to betray it, but amid all, giving a peace which the world can not take away.

J. W. EDMONDS.

NEW YORK, September 1, 1853.

Appeal.

TO THE PUBLIC:

On my recent return from an excursion into the country, I found that during my absence a decision lately pronounced by me had been seized upon as an occasion for an attack, in several quarters, on my religious belief. I was fully aware that that judgment, running counter as it would to popular sentiment, would subject my action to severe criticism, but I confess I did not anticipate that thence would flow an assault on my religious opinions. Were I a private citizen I should content myself with merely claiming the right which belongs to every one in this country, of entertaining such faith on this—the most important of all topics—as my conscience might dictate. And as it is, I might perhaps rest satisfied with challenging those who assail me to point out a single article in my creed that aims at aught else than exalted private worth and public virtue. But as the position which I occupy renders the soundness as well as the integrity of my judgment a matter of public interest, I am bound to acknowledge the right of others to question my faith, and my own obligation to defend it.

I acknowledge a still further obligation. And inasmuch as I accepted my present position under the implied understanding at least, that I believed in the Christian religion, and would administer our civil law according to the principles of the Divine law as it had been revealed to us, on which all our institutions were based, so I am bound to certify to those who have intrusted me with the Divine attribute of administering justice among men, that my reverence for that revelation has not been shaken, nor my obedience to that moral law impaired.

I have not, however, waited for these assaults, to be impressed with these obligations, but have already so far felt them, that I have prepared to publish a volume on the subject, which, but for my other avocations, would ere this have been in the printer's hands. To