

only tradition is war and conquest, the new Emperor is fast increasing his naval power; Turkey is trembling, and all Italy is in a smothered flame. The sooner then that a knowledge of the political future is obtained, the better; and while the Anglo-Saxon race rejoice in their exemption from the doom of other nations, let them learn their destiny, and prepare to fulfil it.

THE "MINISTRY OF ANGELS" REALIZED.

A

LETTER

TO THE

Edwards Congregational Church,

BOSTON.

BY TWO MEMBERS OF THAT CHURCH.

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

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

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

FOURTH THOUSAND.

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

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

Boston, May, 1851.

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LETTER

To the Members of the Edwards Congregational Church, Boston

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

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

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

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

Aware of the sensitiveness usually felt in our denomination,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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