

**ADDRESSES TO THE
PEOPLE, NO. I. COUNSELS
ON SPIRITUALISM**

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Adresses to the people, No. I. Counsels on Spiritualism by Enoch F. Burr

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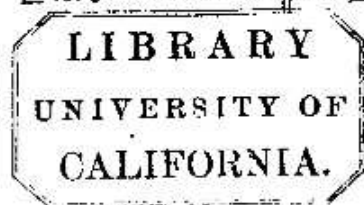
**ADDRESSES TO THE
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Counsels on Spiritualism.

BY A

CONNECTICUT PASTOR.
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COUNSELS ON SPIRITUALISM.

AND when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God?—ISAIAH viii: 19.

THE Law of Moses contains the following passages :
“There shall not be found among you a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer : for all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord.”
“And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul and will cut him off from among his people.”

In accordance with this law, Saul treated sorcery as a capital crime. When his own misconduct became rebellion,—a rebellion which finally extinguished the fortunes of his house in tears and blood,—he was told by Samuel that it was as the sin of witchcraft. It is made one of the greatest virtues of the good king Josiah, that he set a flinty face against all attempts at dealing with spirits ; and one of the greatest crimes of the wicked king Manasseh, that he practised and abetted such attempts. Malachi declares that God will be a swift wit-

ness against the sorcerer. Under the ministry of Paul at Ephesus, the dealers in curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men—so great was the felt antagonism between their new principles and their old practice. And even the mild John is found teaching just the same severe Gospel that lighted up the Ephesian market-place with blazing parchments worth fifty thousand pieces of silver; and closes the record with even sterner words than began it—“And the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderer, and whoremonger, and sorcerer, and idolator, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

The fact that I find in the Scriptures such representations as these is my chief reason for offering to you some thoughts on what has been called Spiritualism. It is no choice subject. I know of none which I would more willingly avoid. But your attention is now being specially called to it through the press and local circumstances: and, on referring to that Religion whose entire lessons I have undertaken to teach, I find that, so far from shunning the theme, she speaks upon it after a fashion of most free and menacing severity. To her, this invoking of the dead is no innocent diversion. To her, these rappings and questionings at the gate of cloistered spirits are no harmless curiosities with which one can properly amuse his leisure, and while away the tedium of a winter evening. She places sorceries of all sorts under solemn ban. They are such trespasses on the night-side of nature as shall enlist against the trespasser the night-side of God. Whether as principals or accessories, none shall engage in rebuilding that Black

Art which Moses cursed and Christ dismantled, without repeating the experience of Julian, and bringing out against themselves avenging fires from the old foundations. Such are the plain teachings. And, holding them to be divinely true, I feel it my duty to waive objections to an unpleasant and somewhat undignified topic, and for once seek your attention to some explanations and suggestions respecting that system of sorcery which, under the more specious name of Spiritualism, is now ambitiously seeking new credence and incurring old penalties.

A few words will suffice to state the system. In this country, it claims to deal almost exclusively with the spirits of dead men—abroad, it claims to deal also with spirits not of our race. The alleged means of doing this are mostly quite different from those employed in olden times. Then, circles were drawn, drugs burned, rods waved, mystic formulas muttered. Now, tables are manipulated; a certain fixing of the eye, or certain passes of the hand, induce in persons of a peculiar temperament what seems like sleep or trance; sometimes, without any visible effort, persons of this class fall into convulsions and other strangely-appearing states. It is claimed that, in connection with these things and sometimes without them, wonderful noises, raps, music, motions are observed, when all known natural causes of such phenomena are absent—articles of furniture of all kinds, but especially tables, tip, turn, shuffle about the room, dance about in the air even, and rap out intelligent answers to questions both verbal and mental—the sleeping or trance mediums tell the thoughts of those with whom they are put in communication, detail what is passing in distant places, describe things in

the spirit-world—while others, as if their bodies were possessed by other wills and energies than their own, independently speak or write what purport to be messages of Swedenborg, Bacon, Socrates. It is maintained that these are literal facts. It is alleged that, being facts, they must be due to the agency of spirits not embodied. And we are recommended to put ourselves in communication with this agency to learn all manner of secrets belonging to the present and future world—to learn History, Science, Morals, Theology; in a word, almost any thing we choose to inquire about.

Such is the system. No doubt it has many sincere believers. And of course I am very free to admit that there is such a thing as a spirit-world—a world of intelligent, active, and powerful beings not discernible by bodily organs. It is also freely admitted that these spirits—angels, devils, disembodied souls of men—feel a very great interest in human affairs. Not less readily is it admitted that in past ages some of these spirits have actually had with men communications of the most striking character: for do not the Scriptures tell me that angels have visibly brought revelations to men, that deceased Moses and Elias showed themselves to the three disciples on Tabor, and that a large number of persons in the same age were literally taken possession of by demons, who convulsed them, and made them foam at the mouth very much as some mediums are said to do? Further, as a believer in the Scriptures, I fully grant that some of these beings have very extensive dealings of a certain kind with us still: good spirits ministering to them who shall be heirs of salvation; and bad spirits going about seeking whom they may devour, contriving temptations,

suggesting evil thoughts, taking away the seed of truth from hearts in which it has been divinely sown. Far be it from me to do otherwise than allow most unreservedly what has had such unwavering reception among practical Christians in all ages! And I may even go so far as to allow that there are some new natural facts lying at the basis of Spiritualism, crude and imperfectly developed as yet, but which in time and in right hands may be of some service to mankind. All this is admitted most freely; and yet I stand here to-day for the purpose of giving a very unfavorable account of Spiritualism, and one as confident as it is unfavorable. I have had my eye on it for years. I have given it such examination as seems to me greatly sufficient. And, as the result, I am bold to testify against it in behalf of both science and religion. To the best of my belief it is their enemy. It is their enemy in principles and works, by stratagem and proclamation, with the right hand and with the left. And the least I feel permitted to say to you is, that it ought to be most decisively, energetically, and summarily rejected; and that he best consults his honor, his safety, and his virtue, who keeps most remote from its influence.

In support of these views I submit the following statements:

I. A vast amount of delusion and imposture has been proved against Spiritualism.

Every person who has been wakeful to the events of the last few years has known very many cases in illustration of this statement. He has perhaps been in personal contact with some; he has known others very surely, only at second hand. They have swarmed to him in the newspapers, he has heard them recited in

lectures, he has seen them amassed in books. Mr. Lewis publishes his certificate, Mr. Richmond his, Prof. Page his, Prof. Watson his. Conscious and unconscious muscular action, ventriloquism, concealed machinery, natural magic have all at times been found helping to lift the natural into the supernatural, and expand commonplaces into wonders. Some story bristling with marvels sweeps ambitiously across the stage. After a little comes an annihilating exposure, as bristling with unanswerable signatures and affidavits. Such undeniably has been no small part of the history of Spiritualism. And it has often pressed very sorely the honor and credibility of some of the most prominent promoters of the system. The Davises, the Sunderlands, the Maxwells have ere this found themselves in no enviable position before the public. Their delusions have sometimes looked wonderfully like impostures. Are the two exposures of the medium Fowler already forgotten? Do we not still well remember the birth of the Great Motive Force in Massachusetts? Does not Auburn still blush for the famous colony to Mountain Cove, in Virginia?

The fact is, we need be in no haste to admit all the wonderful stories told of the feats of Spiritualism. Extravagances are no new thing in this field. The history of the system, to say nothing of the intrinsic incredibility of the things alleged, will warrant us in making a very liberal abatement from much that we hear. No doubt we are fairly entitled to suspect that if many of these threatening narratives of facts were properly winnowed of their chaff, the residuum would be neither very dazzling nor abundant. We may fairly presume that