

GS255

TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

“Read, Mark, Learn, and Inwardly Digest.”

LAST ADDRESS OF REV. JOHN PIERPONT.

Our friend who has just welcomed you to this city, has welcomed you, among other things, as “infidels.” I think it may not be inappropriate to say one word upon that formidable word “Infidel.” What does it mean? Etymologically, it means an unfaithful one. In that sense, I do not recognize the epithet as belonging to myself; I do not believe that it belongs to you. In another sense, it means those who do not agree in certain particulars with the majority of the community around them. Almost all of the various Christian denominations are very much in the habit of branding those not of their peculiar denomination as infidels. The Catholic Church has, in my own hearing, spoken of all Protestants as infidels. Many of the Protestant sects speak of the most enlightened and the most Christian of their fellow-Christians as infidels, not because they are less faithful, but because, in fact, they are more faithful than themselves. Faithful to what? is the great question. If faithfulness to a party or sect is meant, I do not care how soon nor how generally I am called an infidel; I welcome the epithet. But if faithfulness to truth or one’s convictions to truth is meant, I hold that we are not infidels, but that, on the contrary, we are “faithful among the faithless.” Let a man be faithful to the truth, or, what is equivalent, faithful to his convictions as to what is true, and you may trust that man anywhere. But, my friends, it requires some backbone in a man or a woman to be faithful to his or her convictions, when those convictions depart by a very sharp angle from the opinions of those around them. I know that, if you mean by infidel, an unbeliever, I am infidel to a great many of the forms of popular religion, because I do not believe in many of the points which are held by a majority of the Christian, nay even of the Protestant Church. It is not necessary for me to say in what I do not believe, and in regard to which I am, therefore, an infidel; but let me say, how many times, for example, have I heard Wm. Lloyd Garrison denounced in former years as an infidel, not because of his want of belief in the doctrines of the Christian Church, or even of the Orthodox

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Church, but because he did not believe with the people at large in the sanctity of slavery, and did not believe it was a divine institution, and said so, and did what he could to dissuade others from that belief. Not ten days ago, I heard Gerritt Smith denounced as an infidel, because he did not believe in the Sabbath, but Gerritt Smith observes both the seventh day and the first day, and is therefore more of an observer of the Sabbath than those who reproach him with infidelity.

Why are we Spiritualists? Why do I take that opprobrious name, and acknowledge it before the world? Because I am thoroughly convinced, by the evidence presented to my mind, that the leading doctrines of the Spiritualists are true. The facts upon which those doctrines rest—as all doctrines rest finally upon facts—I know to be true. If you can show the fallacy of the reasoning by which I infer the doctrine from the fact, show it. If not, perhaps you had better restrain the charge of infidelity until you can establish it on better evidence.

Why does any man believe in any religious doctrine? If he believes it in the proper sense of that word, he receives it as true upon the ground of having seen evidence of its truth. If he takes it on the authority of pastor, teacher or parent, it is not belief, it is an echo. His intelligence has nothing to do with it. He says he believes it, because he is told to say he believes so, or told to believe so. A proper belief in regard to matters of religion consists in this: the conviction of an intelligent mind of the truth of a proposition because of the evidence that is presented to that mind that that proposition is true. No other belief on the subject of religion is worthy of the name of religion. Now, we believe in the fact, that under certain conditions, in these our days, communications do come to us from the spirits of those who have passed through the gate which we call the gate of death, through certain media or mediums; and from that fact we believe that the spirit survives the body in a personal, conscious state—a state of intelligent, moral activity. That fact makes us Spiritualists; or, rather, (speaking only for myself) that fact makes me a Spiritualist; not because I believe in the facts of which other men have been cognizant, but because of facts which I have witnessed, to which my senses have borne their testimony. I believe on the same grounds of reason that induced the beloved disciple to believe the Gospel. The things which his eyes had seen, and his ears had heard, and his hands had handled, these declared he unto his fellow disciples and to the world at large. And what higher testimony can we have of

any fact than the testimony of our senses? What I see with my eyes, what I hear with my ears, and what I feel through the medium of my nervous system, I know; and I know that as well as St. John knew what he saw and heard and felt. For my use and my purposes, my senses are as good as the senses of St. John, the beloved disciple, or any other saint. God in that respect has put us upon an equality, and has given us senses by which we hold communion with the objects of the external world around us.

Now, here are two questions which present themselves to every intelligent and thoughtful mind—whence came I? whither am I going? These questions are to be answered by the reasoning faculties of man. Whence came I? I put my hand upon this desk. This object, I see, is at rest; it cannot move itself. I go to hear a lecture on natural philosophy. The professor stands by his table and says, "All matter is endowed with what we call *vis inertiae*—the quality of lying still. It cannot move itself." This ball that I hold in my hand would lie there until it decomposed, unless it was moved by some power other than itself. Now, what is true of this ball which I hold in my hand, and which I move in my hand, is just as true of this great ball, the earth on which we stand, and on which we move and have our being. "What moves that ball?" I ask. "Why, my hand." "Is not your hand matter?" "Yes." "What moves your hand, then?" "There is a mechanical arrangement here of levers and pulleys, and my arm moves my hand." And what moves your arm?" "Well, the nervous system connected with it." "And what moves the nervous system?" "Well, the brain, which is the centre of the nervous system." "Well, but is not the brain matter?" "Yes." "What moves the brain?" "The spirit that is in man."

And when we come to the last analysis, it is *spirit* that moves all matter. The ultimate motive power of all the motion of the universe is spirit. That is what I believe, my friends. I believe that inasmuch as matter cannot be said to move itself, as matter cannot move, spirit cannot rest; it is always active, always in motion; as incapable of rest as matter is incapable of motion. Then, I come to this: all the growth in the vegetable world, all the formations in the mineral world, indicate design. The formation of quartz crystal in the bosom of the limestone rock indicates that that is the work of spirit, and that spirit pervades that rock as perfectly as it pervades space—that it pervades every sphere in every system—that it is universal.

Then I come to an omnipresent, an omnipotent, and an omniscient spirit; and that spirit I call God; and I read in the New Testament "God is a spirit." So I make a distinction between the Maker and the things that are made, and realize that that spirit ministers to all that it produces, and manifests itself through all worlds and all time, and that he works, not six days alone, but seven. His work was from eternity, and probably will continue through eternity. He works through certain principles or laws of action. Laws are often spoken of as if they were the cause of production; but according to my idea, laws never do anything. A law is defined by the elementary writers on law as a rule of action, never an agent. A law never acts, but is the rule according to which some agent acts. Principles are never agents; principles do nothing. Men act according to principles but principles never act. In spirit, you always have an agency of action. Therefore am I, and therefore are you, I suppose, Spiritualists.

Then more especially are we Spiritualists when, having asked the question whence we came, we comprehend that we came from spirit, not from matter. When we look around upon the material world, we see matter changing continually its forms, but not its nature as matter. There is ice. Men melt it at thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit, into water; it is the same substance, but different in form. Carry it up to two hundred and twelve degrees, and the water changes its form, and becomes vapour. You cannot see it, but it goes up into the cool regions of the atmosphere, and there assumes the form of visible vapour; and when it goes higher it changes its form again, and comes down upon us as rain.

So other objects continually change their form, but their nature is the same; and no part of matter ever comes to nothing, or ever came from nothing. Then all life, all motion, all change, comes directly or indirectly from the action of spirit; and hence we receive the doctrine, that *the spirit* is the man, and believe that if the spirit survives after the process we call death, the man survives, and is the identical man. Not that his external form is the same; we know it is not. Philosophers tell us that the whole human body changes once in about seven years, but the personal identity remains the same. I therefore conclude that I came from spirit, came from the spirit-world, and am myself a spirit.

Then comes the question, Whither am I going? What says reason? Reason says, spirit cannot rest; spirit cannot be

annihilated ; spirit must live, must act, wherever it is. The great question then comes, shall this spirit, which is now personal, retain its individuality after it passes the curtain that divides the present from the future, or shall it be merged in the infinite spirit, as one drop of rain is merged in the ocean into which it falls ? There is the great question. And when I know that the spirits that have known me, and that I have known, can and do, through certain media, hold communication with me, when I see the expression of my wife, who has been more than ten years in the spirit-world beaming out upon me from another face, when she speaks to me as her husband, when she reminds me of the past, when she tells me of her present condition, when she assures me that there is a pleasant place waiting for me when I come ; when my father speaks to me through a medium who describes him, and says he looks like me, and tells me in what particulars he differs from me, and tells me a fact which no other human being in the world but myself and he know, I am sure that I am having a communication from my father, and that, when I cast off the fleshy part of my nature, I am to meet the spirit of my father on the other side of this curtain, and that I am going into his society. When a woman, whom I never saw before in my life, and who probably never saw me, tells me that there is a spirit who calls me by a particular name who was alive and well when I saw him last, and I say it is a mistake, that he is not in the spirit-world, and he tells me that he has been there several months, and on enquiring of his friends, I learn that he has been in the spirit-world several months, I feel justified in saying that I *know*.

Now, I ask can any one come to the conviction that there is a spirit in him, and not feel blessed and benefited by it ? Who has not said, only relieve me from the dread uncertainty that hangs over me, only let me know that I shall be individualized and as I am now, and I ask no other question ; I know that I am in the hands of the Universal Spirit, and it will be well with me as it has always been well with me in His hands. Upon that arm I can cast myself with entire confidence only let me know that I shall be at all. Through Spiritualism I do know that the spirit survives the body, and that when it passes through the grave, it has communion with those who have gone before. When, therefore, I am asked the question, whither am I going, I answer, I am going into the spirit-world, there to meet kindred spirits ; to join, in the language of the scriptures, " the general assembly of the church of the first born, whose names are written

in heaven." "In heaven!" But where is heaven? That question laboured in my mind for years, until I felt the fact of Spiritualism: Where is the spirit to go?—whither?—to what place? Shall it go to one star or many, or roam from star to star? Shall it go from luminous world to luminous world, or shall it be confined to the present star? for this earth that we live on is a star, as bright and beautiful when seen from Venus, as Venus is when seen from the earth. Shall we go to Venus or stay upon the earth? For myself, I am satisfied that before long, in all probability, before I have the pleasure of addressing another Spiritual Convention, I shall put off this fleshy garment, and when next you meet, I may be with you, unseen, and may possibly hold communion with one or more of you, when you wake or when you sleep. At all events, that is my faith; and to that faith I do not mean to be infidel while I live, and do not, think I shall. People may call me what they please. Faithful or unfaithful is a question which lies between me and the Infinite Spirit alone. With Him I am perfectly content that it should rest.

I, therefore, as it becomes me on this occasion, retire from the chair to which, through your kindness, I was invited last year, with the knowledge that I am inadequate to perform its duties. I cannot see your faces nor hear your voices to-day so well, even as I could last year. I gratefully acknowledge your kindness to me, and trust that, as the faith in which we are held together as brothers and sisters is not a new faith, but a faith that has been held by some in all ages, it will be held in all ages; and that as in our age, more than in the past, evidences are had that it is the true faith, more and more will gather round this standard; and although, before you meet again, I may have passed away, I believe that I shall be permitted, even then, to meet with those who are still left on this side of the stream which flows between the seen and the unseen worlds.

In Memoriam.

This eminent and venerable man, known—by name at least—on both sides of the Atlantic, as preacher, orator, poet, scholar, patriot, reformer, and philanthropist, peaceably passed from the scene of his earthly labours to the better life, on Monday, August 17th, at the ripe age of eighty-one. The editor of the *Banner of Light*, in an obituary notice, remarks:—"His career embraced almost every department of action that could give a man confidence, and develop the courage and the strength of manhood that is in him. He was a reformer, a man of ideas, a lover of truth wherever found, impervious to the bugbear of social fear, brave and tender, strong and feminine, tenacious of his opinions, overflowing with charity, and full of a knightly resolution to challenge all comers for the cause of Truth, in whose defence he stood, a genuine poet, and a sincere, healthy, whole man."

At the commemoration service held at the church where he had been pastor, a large concourse, including George Thompson, Lloyd Garrison, and some of the most eminent citizens of Boston and its vicinity were present. The Rev. Mr. Stetson, who delivered the funeral address, said—"He had known the deceased nearly fifty years; he was a great worker; the leading philanthropist of his age for a whole generation. Neither threats nor persuasion could turn him from his line of duty. When asked by the members of his congregation not to speak upon certain 'exciting topics,' his reply was:—"I will stand in a free pulpit, or none: I will speak the whole truth or not speak at all!" He was imbued with great kindness of heart, warm and tender sympathies, exalted hopes for the race, and possessed of such an indomitable will that he would willingly be reduced to beggary—be thrown aside, sacrificing everything for reform, or such unpopular truths as met with the approbation of his own conscience. As a strenuous advocate of human rights, and freedom for all races, he had left his mark upon the century."

Becoming a Spiritualist late in life, he proclaimed his faith far and wide, in the same brave spirit in which he did everything else. He *lived* to the last hour of his life. His last public act was to preside over the National Convention of Spiritualists, held at Providence, U.S.A., only a few days before his death. A member of that Convention writes:—"We shall

never forget his last words to us at the National Convention. Extending his hand he said, 'Brother, go on; Christ, our Elder Brother is with you; God, the Father, and His angels are with you! Proclaim the ministry of spirits to earth! It is the chief blessing of my life! Do the work of an Evangelist, and as far as possible, make our faith practical among men.'

His first thought in the spirit-world, as his last in this, seems to have been given to the advancement of that knowledge of its verity and power of blissful communion with the beloved of earth which he has now realized. At a gathering of friends in Boston a few days after his mortal decease, his spirit was distinctly seen, taking hold of the arm of an old friend who was present, and who felt the touch, though he did not perceive the presence of the spirit. The lady who had seen the spirit, becoming entranced, the spirit through her, spoke as follows:—

Blessed—thrice blessed—are they who die with a knowledge of the truth.

After a slight pause, the spirit resumed:—

BROTHERS AND SISTERS—The problem now is solved with me. And because I live, you shall live also; for the same divine Father and Mother that confers immortality upon one soul, bestows the gift upon all. Oh, I am so joyous to-night, that my soul can scarcely give expression to its thoughts through this weak mortal; and I never realized before how good God is! I regret I cannot portray to you the transcendent beauty of the vision I saw just before I passed to the spirit-world, as my dear ones stretched out their hands to receive me saying, "Your time has arrived—come home with us." The glories of this new life are beyond description. Language would fail me should I attempt to describe them. Tell those who were in sympathy with me, but not with my belief, that what was then to me a belief, is now a blessed reality. I know that I live and can return.

Then addressing the friend, whose arm he had just taken, he said:—

My good brother, go on in the work in which you are engaged regardless of the derision and scorn of those who do not understand you. Be fearless in the way of right, for Christ our Elder Brother, and God our Father, will ever be with you to bless and sustain you in the noble cause in which you are engaged. Take courage brother; persevere resolutely; it will be well with you.

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