

THE "UNKNOWABLE."

"I TAKE it also that St. Paul would have attributed to Christ a 'spiritual body,' but what precisely that may mean I do not know, and I know that no one knows or can know."

That is a sentence from an article by Dr. Edwin A. Abbott, in defense of the position taken by a number of learned divines who repudiate the doctrine of the literal resurrection of the body, and yet desire to hold fellowship with the churches which make that doctrine part of their creed.

The dogmatism contained in that sentence is equal at least to that which the writer of it strongly deprecates in others. It is of the same sort as the agnostic assumption which designates the Deity not only as the "Unknown" but as the "Unknowable." It virtually says, "What I don't know nobody else knows or ever can know." It is more arbitrary and arrogant than anything in the creeds by which these "liberal" religionists and "free-thinkers" refuse to be bound.

Any man may reasonably acknowledge his own ignorance. He may reasonably confess his inability to see an object or perceive a principle or understand a proposition. But he has no right to deny that power in others. It is as irrational to say it is impossible for another to comprehend something that one cannot grasp, as to deny the existence of an object which a strong-eyed man describes but which a near sighted man cannot behold. As there are differences in the scope of natural vision among different individuals, so there are in the capability to comprehend a truth or to perceive things that are spiritual.

The person who has no spiritual perception is in an abnormal state. The rule all over the world among all races and in all ages is, that the spiritual faculty by which faith is exercised exists in greater or less degree. This is the normal condition of mankind as natural vision is normal. A few unfortunates are born blind, and it may be that a few still greater unfortunates are born spiritually blind. However, it is our opinion that spiritual dimness of vision can be cured, by the effort of the individual and the power of Deity which responds to it, while physical blindness is in some cases beyond remedy in the present state of human skill.

Be that as it may the dogmatism which denies to others the power to behold physically, mentally or spiritually what one or a few may be able to perceive is unreasonable, assumptive and impertinent. Yet it is common among avowed atheists and is not infrequent

among professing so-called "Christians."

It is quite likely that Dr. Abbott, and others of his school, may be entirely ignorant of what Paul spoke of as "a spiritual body." But how does he know that nobody else knows what it is? And if it be conceded that no one now knows what "a spiritual body is, how does he know that nobody ever can know it?

Is it not probable that Paul knew what he was talking about when he said: "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body?" And speaking of the resurrection, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body?" And if one man can know what that is, what is there to hinder any number of men from knowing the same thing?

If Dr. Abbott believes the New Testament, or the Christian religion at all, he must acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth knows what "a spiritual body" is. If He was not raised from the dead with "a spiritual body," then the whole testimony of His Apostles is false, and a vital and turning point of the Christian religion is a deception and a snare. That Jesus Christ is "the resurrection and the life," that he will "change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body," are essential elements of the Christian creed. And whatever may be our lack of understanding now as to the nature of a spiritual body, when that change shall come to us we shall surely understand it as Christ understands it, "for we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known."

Paul learned and saw many things which were not commonly understood in his day. Others may have had similar manifestations. That which was understood then, may also be understood now. The same power and light that revealed those things to Paul can reveal them to persons prepared to receive them, just as well today as in the remote past. This, it appears to us, requires no argument. It is very nearly self-evident. If Paul knew what a spiritual body is, then others may know it now, and when any man, however learned and important, says he "knows that no one knows or can know it," he announces himself an egotist and places himself in the rank of dogmatic atheists.

"A spiritual body," as the old scriptures describe it and as explained in modern holy writ, is a body quickened by spirit instead of blood, and though composed of the same or similar elementary particles that make up the natural body, is so changed in their arrangement, that it is capable of things that the

natural body could not achieve, and is freed from the limitations and bonds of the laws that govern this lower sphere. An illustration of this change, though not complete, is found in the difference between the charcoal and the diamond, both pure carbon, but one almost infinitely above the other in value and beauty.

The chief difficulty in the way of understanding anything about spiritual bodies and beings is, that spirit is supposed to be immaterial and therefore incomprehensible. An immaterial substance—a virtual contradiction of terms—having no properties in common with matter, and yet, having substance and entity, cannot be likened to anything we know. Therefore it may be classed, by persons who take this view, as unknowable as well as unknown. But the supposition that spirit is in no sense material will be found to be a fallacy. Though differing in important particulars from what is commonly called matter, it is a tangible, substantial, extended and limited reality, existing in space which cannot be occupied by another body at the same instant, and possessing other characteristics of those grosser substances we call natural things.

A spiritual body is comprehensible. Measurably it can be understood in this life. Certainly it will be fully comprehended in the life to come. And while the natural man may not understand the things of God because they are spiritually discerned, he should hesitate to deny the power of perception in others which may not have been developed in himself. Surely it is not wise or modest or Christian, for one who claims to be a teacher in Israel to declare that something he does not know is not known and never can be known, and he should ponder on the words of the Great Teacher: "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter."

THE BRITISH CENSUS.

On the night of the 5th inst. the tenth decennial census of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was taken. The process by which this work is performed by the Britons is as near perfection as possible. Within the short period of 24 hours material was accumulated for the compilation of statistics for ten years in all the British Isles.

When glanced at carefully the process seems very simple. The United Kingdom is divided for this purpose into 40,000 districts, and the cost will not exceed \$700,000, while the same work in the United States costs over