

CHRISTIANITY AND SPIRITUALISM

IRRECONCILABLE.

BY WILLIAM EMMETTE COLEMAN.

"And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled." — Luke vi. 37.

SPIRITUALISM AND CHRISTIANITY are radically antagonistic, and impossible of assimilation or harmonization. The genius and spirit of the two are antipodal; and, despite the many efforts to conjoin them since the inauguration of the spiritual dispensation (speaking theologically) thirty years ago, it has ever been found — as it ever will be — an impossible task to reconcile their many inherent and insuperable contrarieties.

Christianity is based upon the life and teachings of one individual — Jesus, the Christ; Spiritualism is based on the life and teachings of no man or set of men, but upon the revelations of nature, both in the material and spiritual worlds. Christianity recognizes and blindly accepts the leadership of a young Hebrew living nearly two thousand years ago; Spiritualism neither recognizes nor accepts any special leadership, either on earth or in the spirit-spheres. Christianity declares the life and words of Jesus to be a revelation from God to man, sufficient, full, complete, by which our thoughts, words, and deeds must be guided if we would attain the kingdom of heaven; Spiritualism knows nothing of any authoritative verbal or pen-and-ink revelation from the Supreme to man, whether emanating from Judea or India, Persia or China, Europe or America, — emphatically declaring, through the utterances of the angel-world, that the life or words of no man, however eminent in goodness and wisdom, are to be regarded as the infallible standard by which our lives and words should be measured or gauged.

Christianity affirms, through its Christ, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but his (Christ's) words will never pass away; Spiritualism distinctly and positively asserts that the words of no man, even in this enlightened age, ablaze with scientific research and philosophic lore, much less those of one living in an unenlightened, barbaric era, will

endure forever; but that many, very many, of the teachings of the wisest and purest sages, whether of the past or of the present, will sink into merited oblivion, with their kindred errors of all times and all ages. Christianity points to the man of Nazareth as the best, purest, wisest, most godlike mortal our planet has ever seen, or, mayhap, is likely to see in the æons yet to come; Spiritualism affirms the impossibility of a man, living in the childhood of the race, in an obscure, semi-civilized land, devoid of the advantages of literary, scientific, and artistic culture, reared in the midst of poverty and unfavorable surroundings, his companions the dregs of the people, illiterate, contemned, despised, fishermen and harlots, publicans and sinners, — the impossibility of such a man attaining the highest point of moral and spiritual excellence, of purity, virtue, and wisdom, — and capable of imparting to all mankind, even to remotest ages, from the superabundance of his own plethoric store, the sublimest lessons of ethical instruction, the most exalted and transcendent inspirations of religious culture, growth, and aspiration.

Christianity has for its corner-stone the vicarious atonement, that is, that God's only-begotten Son voluntarily took upon himself the office of mediator between man and God, and so was re-born on earth, suffered and died, in order that God might be satisfied and admit into heaven those only who know of and believe in this mode of being saved from annihilation or future torment. Spiritualism scouts the idea of vicarious atonement, and teaches that all human conduct is amenable to the natural law of compensation, which metes out to every individual such a degree of happiness or unhappiness as necessarily follows in consequence of both the post-natal and ante-natal conditions by which he has been surrounded, but leaves clear the way for endless progression in the spirit-spheres.

Christianity teaches a finality in moral and religious instruction, — the doctrines of Jesus; Spiritualism proclaims the grand, the soul- uplifting, the everlasting truth, the ETERNAL PROGRESSION of mind and matter from everlasting to everlasting, — no finality, no cessation of energy and efforts, mental or physical, no stagnation, and its ultimate attendants, decay and death. Christianity affixes limits and bounds to our attainment of truth, moral and spiritual, — to our aspirations heavenward, — by confining us to the few confused and conflicting sentences attributed to Jesus in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago; while Spiritualism — heaven's last, best gift to man — places no fetters upon the human mind and its achievements in any field of emprise, but urges on, with might and main, the oft-flagging endeavors of feeble, frail humanity to surpass all previous efforts, whether in the domain of science, morals, or religion, whether proceeding from Aryan sage,

American seer, or Judean carpenter, whether found in sacred Vedas or Holy Bible, musty with age and hoar with antiquity.

Christianity enjoins the observance of rites and ceremonies, and appoints fasts and feasts, and holy days; Spiritualism ignores all such as relics of the barbaric age in which they originated, leaving it to every man to work out his own salvation by persistent efforts for the true and right, — teaching that doing good to our fellow-men is the best way of worshipping God, and that every day is alike holy.

Christianity is conservative, dogmatic, anti-progressive, a stumbling-block in the path of enlightenment, progress, civilization; Spiritualism is radical, untrammelled with dogmas, creedless, progressive, ever seeking, ever welcoming new truth, — the great liberalizing power of the nineteenth century, the universal solvent of enervating creeds and time-worn superstitions, — impelling, with titanic energy, to further and still further advances in art, science, philosophy, religion, civilization, enlightenment, — in a word, progress universal. Christianity has cursed the world almost from its very birth, deluging it in blood and woe, fire and slaughter; Spiritualism has blessed the world, — is blessing it as it was never blessed before, — bringing smiles and peace to the weary and broken-hearted, and joy and gladness unutterable to the mourning and the sorrowful.

Christianity is the effete relic of a dead and mouldering past, insisting on dragging through the world its loathsome corpse, — a horrid, ghastly spectacle, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness, — a grisly skeleton, grinning in fiendish glee at the manifold miseries, mountain-high, it has heaped upon helpless humanity; Spiritualism is a fresh and rosy-cheeked damsel, full of hope, elasticity, and buoyancy of spirit, fair to look upon, mild and gentle, joyous and laughing, cheering all, inspiring all, banishing gloom from every heart, spreading blessings innumerable along her pathway at every step, making earth indeed a very heaven. Shall we attempt to unite these two, — the grinning, ghastly spectre from the charnel-house of pagan folly and Hebraic dogma, and the blooming virgin fresh-descended from the Summer-land, bursting like a goddess on our enraptured vision? Never! Unite Christianity and Spiritualism? Sooner unite oil and water, flood and flame, light and darkness.

Spiritualism is at one, in spirit, with the tendencies of modern thought; while the claims of Christianity are in direct antagonism to the spirit of the age. The whole drift of scientific research and discovery is in opposition to Christianity in all its myriad shapes. The present century is preëminently the age of Liberalism, as even the Church tremblingly admits; Christianity, from its foundations, is now being shaken as it has never been shaken before.

4 CHRISTIANITY AND SPIRITUALISM IRRECONCILABLE.

Gradually, since the Reformation and the invention of printing, have the foundations of Christianity been weakening, its props and supports, one by one, falling through decay and death; and now, from all sides, on every hand, a host of earnest, vigorous workers are busily tugging away at the base of its deep-laid foundation walls, and its corner-stone — the supremacy of Jesus Christ, his atonement, life, and teachings — will speedily be dragged out into the sunlight of God's truth, a crumbling mass of sand and gravel. Soon will the entire structure, now swaying to and fro, topple and descend with a fearful crash, "and great will be the fall thereof;" illustrating forcibly the truth of Jêsus' borrowed Talmudic parable, — the ultimate overthrow of the house built upon the sand.

On one hand we see Science, working with ever-increasing, never-flagging zeal and vigor, and with its array of facts that will not down, — obstinately refusing to assimilate, or to be brought into harmony with Christian tradition and Biblical legend. Keen-eyed Philosophy too, is, with its telescopic vision, pointing out Christianity's many lamentable defects, poorly patched up with flimsy subterfuges, empty assertions, and pretentious assumptions; while Freethought, under its varied aspects of Free Religion, Secularism, Materialism, Positivism, Deism, Atheism, Reformed Judaism, etc., is decimating its ranks through the power of enlightened reason and common sense.

Crowning all these, we behold the swift-advancing hosts of Modern Spiritualism — returning legions from the heavenly world — their guides, directors, inspirers, leaders. Under the inspiring guidance of this angel-band, forward they press with unblenching zeal, storming even the (presumed) impregnable fortress in which Christianity has been so long intrenched — Supernaturalism; penetrating into its secret depths, unearthing its sacred mysteries of inspiration, prophecy, and miracle, proving them the common property of all mankind, devoid alike of sanctity or exclusiveness, in pure accord with Nature's unerring, never-varying laws, eternal as herself.

The fact that science, philosophy, reason, morality, common sense, intuition, and pure religion itself, are all combined, in solid phalanx, against Christianity and its arrogant claims, furnishes sufficient grounds for the refusal to be called by the Christian name, and for preferring rather that of Spiritualist, in its purity and simplicity.

Published by the AMERICAN LIBERAL TRACT SOCIETY, Boston. Price
35 cents per 100; \$3 per 1000. Postage free.