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SPIRITUALISM AND THE GOSPEL OF JESUS.

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The religious mind of this country presents a very strange anomaly. On the one hand we have Christians opposing Spiritualism, and on the other, the Spiritualists claiming kindred with Jesus, the assumed founder of Christianity. All our knowledge of Jesus is derived from the New Testament. Apart from that book, no man has ever succeeded in demonstrating the existence of Jesus as an undeniable historical fact, though much corroborative testimony certainly exists. In appealing to the Bible, we use it, we treat it, exactly as we would any other book—analysing its matter as we proceed, and crediting it according to the relative value of the various parts as it appears to us. In this way the Bible is on friendly terms with everyone, whatever be their views. It will not quarrel with them if they will not quarrel with it. What causes difficulty is the action of those who place the Bible in a false relation by imposing it as a thrall and a fetter upon man's intellect and conscience. It is written, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and as all of the Bible is taken for "Scripture," every part is assumed to be of equal value and importance. This syllogism men adopt without ever asking themselves what is meant by the term "Scripture." It signifies "holy writing;" and why "holy writing?" In those days of Syrian Spiritualism, that which came through prophets, or "mediums" as we would call them—that which was imparted to men from the spirit-world—was called "holy," because it was good, pure, and adapted to elevate men's minds towards that which was eternal and spiritual. It was also the opinion of those ancient Spiritualists that all such utterances came direct from God. Nowadays we think differently, and know that all truth is from God, but that what comes from spiritual sources is not necessarily or absolutely true. Even though the fountain were pure, the channel is human—faulty; and hence, though "holy writings" may be very good in themselves, they are alike the subject of reason and criticism with any other writings or books. That and similar terms in the Bible refer to spiritual facts and allusions, and it takes a spiritual student to read their import aright. Without this spiritual light and knowledge, commentators have misjudged the meaning of such passages, and placed the Bible as a bondage upon the minds of men, thus stultifying their mental and spiritual growth, and rendering the Bible a curse rather than a benefit to the race. All of the Bible is not "holy writing." Much of it is a mere record of events, the same as may be found in any other history, and has to be judged by its consistency or value. In this light we attribute no authoritative importance to the statements respecting Jesus recorded in the gospels, and we do not profess to endorse them all, or accept them all as of equal value. If we compared them carefully some contradictions might be discovered, on which account we prefer to follow the general portraiture of Jesus as it is depicted in the spirit of the gospels, and form our opinion of his mission from that genera

view, rather than from the consideration of separate texts and statements.

The records agree in asserting that Jesus was born of poor parents, and that he was brought up to the humble calling of a mechanic. He was a child of intuitive genius, and at the age of twelve years he was discovered in the Temple puzzling the erudite brains of the leading theologians with his questions and answers—a feat which children very readily accomplish at the present day. Bible history says nothing of him till his thirtieth year, when he entered upon his public career, and displayed such a marked individuality that it would be madness to suppose that he worked passively at the carpenter's bench from the time he was twelve till he "entered on his ministry." The general supposition is that he left his humble home and wandered forth into the world in search of knowledge; that he visited Egypt—the land of occult philosophy—and, perhaps, India; that he returned to his native land with the full intent of reforming her institutions and enlightening her children, with a mind stored with knowledge, and faculties fully developed and at ready control by careful cultivation and exercise. Education with the child of spiritual genius is not cramming the memory with a few basketfuls of old books, but a calling out of the Divine powers of the human soul, whereby all knowledge and power is given unto men. Such were at any rate the accomplishments of Jesus. He betrayed remarkable spiritual powers. He was psychometric, clairvoyant, could heal the sick even at a distance, exercised wonderful biological influence over mind and matter, could "summon legions of angels" to his aid, worked by a spiritual power delegated to him by "the Father," and did his mighty works by the "power of the Holy Ghost." We see in this portrait a man with remarkable psychological endowments, and moreover, a medium for superior influences—according to his own candid acknowledgment.

We may next notice the positiveness of his character, and the uncompromising opposition which he offered to the ecclesiastical, social, and political institutions and usages of the time. He characterised the priesthood as "whited sepulchres" and pretentious hypocrites, the lawyers as the robbers of the widow and the fatherless, and the political authorities as tyrants. He neither respected the Sabbath nor the man's corn through which he walked and helped himself to. He abrogated in his person all religion except trust in the Divine Father, all social usages except brotherly love, and all law except the "new commandment" which he made the basis of his social intercourse. No wonder that all classes of society were against him—that the respectable people held him as of no repute—that the rich despised him, the sanctimonious reviled him, the theologians thought he had "a devil," and the authorities put him to death as a political offender.

He had his friends. The lowly and erring were particularly dear to him: "publicans and sinners" were his associates, and he chose his followers from the most ignorant and humble rank in society. These understood him very imperfectly. When in danger, they all deserted him: Peter denied him, Judas betrayed him, Thomas doubted him, and Philip was so hopelessly stupid that he could not comprehend the purport of his Master's mission. Yet this strange man, poorly circumstanced as he was, identified himself with his Divine Parent as the loving child would with his father and mother. His motive was truth, his means

love, and his aim goodness to his brother man; and he realised thereby the glorious fact that He and his Father were one. In doing this, he arrogated no special privileges to himself, but in the name of humanity asserted his Divine Sonship, and that no power, either in heaven or earth, had a right to come between a man's soul and his sense of right and duty. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you;" and as God makes "heaven his dwelling place," therefore God is within the innermost of every man, and thus he taught that man was essentially spiritual, divine. The objects of existence were also spiritual. "'My kingdom is not of this world,' but the great mission of my life is spiritual; and so is yours, for you are also the 'sons of God.'" He did not set himself up as superior, or as an object of adoration and worship. On the contrary, he promised that those who should follow him and perform the necessary duties should do even greater things than he himself accomplished. He was the first fruits—the forerunner of a mighty Spiritual Brotherhood; and, as an everlasting member of that sacred compact, he promised to visit them in spirit after his bodily decease. It is recorded that he did so in a tangible physical manner which Spiritualists can well understand. He enforced on no one any belief or creed, but tolerated every man's inability to comprehend his teachings or motives. He enjoined all to adopt his method or example; and what was that? From the *professions* of his modern followers, we would suppose that Jesus was a *copyist*, for they pretend to copy his character, though they miserably fail in all their attempts to do so. Jesus was no copyist—no imitator of others. Many good men had preceded him, the paragon of his people, with whose renown he was no doubt acquainted; but we do not read of him imitating Moses, David, or Isaiah, but he truthfully and diligently lived out HIMSELF; and the spiritual light within him, which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world," was his pattern and teacher. He asked his friends to follow his example—it was that of a self-reliant, original genius; and if we would achieve any success in spiritual gifts, intellect, or morals, we must try to be like ourselves—not like Jesus, which would be a sheer impossibility, as no two men can be alike; but every man will make the most of life by self-knowledge and self-development. What, then, was the Gospel or gladdening teachings of Jesus? He lived in an age when hollow ceremony was called religion, when government was tyranny, and when society was a seething mass of passional corruption and selfishness—when scepticism on the one hand, and fanatical piety on the other, either openly denied man's spiritual nature, or rendered it ridiculous. Jesus taught a practical religion of the highest morality, that God is spirit, and that man is the child of his bosom; but he left everyone to think as their capabilities permitted them in all philosophical matters. He demonstrated the truth that the child might act in harmony with the parent—that man might be one with God. He exhibited the fact that man in the flesh could be the instrument of spiritual powers and beings for the enlightenment of man on spiritual matters; and, finally, that after physical death man assumed an immortal body, in which he lived in a spiritual world, and could, in accordance with certain conditions, return to those with whom he was in mutual sympathy. This is, in short, the Gospel of Jesus, and it is nothing but pure Spiritualism, the essence and form of all religion. It is not "Christianity," however, with its doctrines, theologies, and dog-

matic assumptions. Where did these proceed from? They have existed in the world from the earliest dawn of idolatrous priestcraft. The Fall and the Devil—the immaculate conception by a virgin—the birth, life, and acts of a God-man—the angry God—the Hell torments—the vicarious Sacrifice, and the Trinity are to be found in nearly every form of idolatry or Paganism that has existed or is now to be found upon the face of the earth. These beliefs were in the minds of the people, who adopted certain notions from the spiritual lights of ancient days, which they engrafted upon their own idolatrous dogmas. If space permitted, we might profitably refer to history, and point out the career of all the Pagan myths that are now taught in our churches as popular Christianity.

What, then, is the duty of Spiritualists in the present crisis? The position of the true Spiritualist is the same as that of Jesus in every sense of the word. The genuine Spiritualist is a man who follows his reason and his intuitions—so did Jesus. The Spiritualist follows truth, and lives by the application of truth to all the relations of life—so did Jesus. The Spiritualist is a self-reliant original—so was Jesus. The Spiritualist is a reformer in every sense of the term—so was Jesus. The Spiritualist is unpopular—so was Jesus. The Spiritualist exercises spirit-power—so did Jesus. In every aspect we have a parallel, all of which are avowedly ignored by Christian Churches, as is seen by their blind hostility to Spiritualism. The Spiritualist is doing the same work now that Jesus did in his day. It is nothing new now, and was nothing new then. It had all been enacted over and over again in the world's history, but each time had got contaminated by the selfishness of priest-hoods, and so required renewing. The great practical question now is, How shall we make it pure, and keep it pure? By having no compact whatever with the prevailing forms of priestcraft. Jesus did not betray his God by claiming kinship with any of the religious bodies of his time, and scorned to wear their name, enjoy their privileges, or conform to their requirements. Let us do likewise, and, with all the power we possess, oppose every effort to Christianise, Mormonise, Mohammedanise, or otherwise pollute Spiritualism. To do so would be to accept the opinions of men—opinions that have been blindly or designedly thrust upon their minds to serve certain selfish ends and shut out from mankind the great spiritual light which comes to every man according to his needs. Spiritualists! surely we may call our souls our own? Let us resist as traitors and dangerous foes those who would enthrall our minds by their personal opinions under the term of "Christian Spiritualism," or any other authoritarian bondage whatever. Jesus brought, "not peace, but a sword," and yet he said, "My peace give I unto you." What is this "peace" which the world cannot take away? It is, that every man be in harmony with his own sense of right and truth, but not with fashionable religion. If Jesus had tried to be at peace with the "Scribes and Pharisees," he might have occupied a high position in the Synagogue, but would he have been at peace? Let every soul answer and be guided by the result of its questioning.

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