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THE RELIGION

OF

SPIRITUALISM.

BY

EUGENE CROWELL, M.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE IDENTITY OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY AND
MODERN SPIRITUALISM," "THE SPIRIT WORLD," ETC.

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

By nature man is a sensuous, an intellectual, and a religious or moral being ; and in his religious nature originates the sentiment of worship or adoration. Religion, therefore, is natural to man ; and it is the basis of all organized society. "By common consent," says Dr. S. B. Brittan, "religion is a universal principle, or constituent element, in the composition of human nature. In all climes and countries, in the savage state and in all stages of civilization, man is a religious being. His temples and altars exist in all lands. It is this that chiefly distinguishes man from the inferior animated creation. There is something in animal instinct that is often closely allied to reason ; but we discover no distinct shadow of the religious sentiment below the plane of human existence." And, as Joel Tiffany remarks, "there is nothing in the world which summons the human being to such a degree of activity as that which we call the religious nature : there is nothing which takes hold of him so deeply. What other influence in the world would cause a mother to destroy her babe but the stimulating influence of this religious nature, coming up, as it does, from the deepest foun-

tain of the soul? Make a man believe that his religious nature requires sacrifice, and he will make that sacrifice, cost what it may, simply because his religious nature wells up so strongly when it is moved, that there is nothing outward which can resist it. Where the individual's religious nature is highly developed, it is more powerful than all his other natures."

The religions of the brightest intellect of the age and of the lowest savage are widely different; but in principle they are the same. They are the forms in which the religious elements of their natures find expression; and each bears witness to the universality of this sentiment in the human mind. Religion is to every man, in some respects, different; and it may safely be said that any form of belief, or system of rites and practices, in which the religious feelings of men find expression—whether in adoration of Deity, invocation of and reliance on spiritual beings, appeals to purely imaginary beings, the worship of visible objects, the elements, &c. (without respect to the character of the belief or practices), if these originate in the religious nature of men, and are upheld by the religious sentiments and feelings—is a religion. Religion is elevating or degrading in the degree that its moral standard is high or low, the moral being the vital and most essential element in all true religion.

"Morality," says Epes Sargent, "is action according to the laws of science and of enlightened reason; and only those laws have an absolute interior authority which are in accordance with our sense of what is true and right, and of divine validity. Religion

is faith in the moral order of the universe : it is particularly the reverent assumption, in thought and feeling, of the existence of an Intelligent Power beyond and above us, that can influence us for good, avert evil, and listen to prayer. But religion in the highest sense is not superstition ; it is not a cowardly dread of a mysterious Being who can harm or help us ; it is not a greed for the satisfying things of our external life, having no correlation with the pure and generous affections : it is not a craving for any selfish and exclusive salvation ; it seeks a salvation from spiritual error, impurity, and blindness. Every thing which we feel and know aright is religious."

Religion, in a perverted and corrupt form, can exist without morality. Many immoral persons are very religious ; and, in all ages, nations and tribes have existed whose religion and morality alike have been vile and debasing. But we find, that, as men become more enlightened and spiritual, both their religious and moral standards become elevated, and approximate in the ratio of their own moral and religious advancement ; so that, in those who have advanced in an eminent degree, it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw the line between their moral and religious sense, so harmonious are their conceptions of duty to both God and man.

But religion as understood by the majority of men is not necessarily related to morality ; and this is evident, when we consider the strength of ecclesiastical organizations in different countries, and compare them, in this respect, with the moral states of the people of those countries, thus :—

In the United States there is one clergyman to each 879 of population.						
In Eng. and Wales	“	“	“	“	718	“
In France	“	“	“	“	235	“
In Italy	“	“	“	“	143	“
In Spain	“	“	“	“	54	“

It would appear from this that the morality and intelligence of these countries are inverse ratio to the proportion of the clergy to the entire population, and forcibly illustrates the fact, that, the farther one is guided by a false compass, the farther he is from the true path. “True religion is before and beyond and deeper than all the churches. It makes churches; itself, only, God-made, in the constitution of human nature. Religion is not priestcraft; it is not ecclesiasticism; it is not ritualism; it is not the acceptance of other people’s belief; it is not opinion: in a word, religion is spiritual, and the forms of it are natural, or man-made.”

There can be no better criterion by which to judge the character of an ecclesiastical organization than its tendency either to a stagnant and corrupt condition, or to a moral and progressive one. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Apply this test to the different theological systems, and to Spiritualism, and, with a just and proper allowance for the excesses always associated with the development of a new faith, we will willingly abide the result.

“True religion,” says Dr. Gall, “is central truth; and all knowledge, in my opinion, should be gathered around it.” The essence of religion is aspiration, the desire for greater light, for more knowledge of God, his character and will, and a better understanding of our duty both toward him and our fellow-men.

True religion is the aroma of the soul. It speaks of the existence and quality of the divine nature in man, as the perfume does of the purity and loveliness of the flower. Religion, in another sense, is the philosophy of the soul.

SPIRITUALISM IS A RELIGION.

Having thus defined religion as it is understood by many, perhaps the majority of the most advanced thinkers of the present time, the next question of importance to us is, Is Spiritualism a religion? And, in order to determine this question, we will endeavor to arrive at its essential principles, and ascertain what elements of religion are present, and what, if any, are lacking; and I think it will then appear that Spiritualism is as truly a religion as it is a philosophy.

Modern Spiritualism conceives a higher and more rational estimate of the Supreme Being than has yet been presented to the world by any system of religious belief or philosophy. While science and philosophy, in our day, affirm that God is law (thus substituting the effect for the cause, and contradicting the self-evident truth, that "every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause," and failing to perceive that it is more difficult to conceive of an impersonal force than of even a personal God), the popular religions of our time recognize in God a changeable Being, of limited perfection, with passions like our own, who, having created human beings, has consigned the majority of them to eternal misery. Spiritualism rejects all such degrading con-

ceptions of Deity, and proclaims an infinite God,—infinite in power, in wisdom, and goodness,—the one sole, self-existent Being, the Father of all, whose loving care extends over all his works. Holy messengers from God teach us of him, as they taught Pythagoras of old, that “God is neither the object of sense, nor subject to passion, but invisible, only intelligible, and supremely intelligent. In his body he is like the light, and in his soul he resembles truth. He is the universal Spirit that pervades and diffuseth itself over all nature. All beings receive their life from him. There is but one only God, who is not, as some are apt to imagine, seated above the world, beyond the orbs of the universe; but, being himself all in all, he sees all the beings that fill his immensity, the only principle, the light of heaven, the Father of all. He produces every thing; he orders and disposes every thing; he is the reason, the life, and the motion, of all beings.”

But still the angelic definition of Deity, that which was most acceptable to primitive, as it is to modern Christian Spiritualism, is, “God is love.”

There are certain fundamental articles of belief common to all orthodox Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike: they are,—

Belief in the Trinity.

In the Bible as the revealed word of God.

The atonement.

Baptism.

Sabbath observance.

Resurrection of the dead.

General judgment.

Eternal rewards and punishment.

Modern Christianity is based upon these dogmas. That it is a religion no one will pretend to deny. What have we to show as the constituent elements of belief of the religion of Spiritualism? These are,—

Belief in the fatherhood of God, and brotherhood of man.

The immortality of the soul.

Spiritual intercourse.

Ministry of angels.

Rewards and penalties for deeds done in the body.

Eternal progression and eternal happiness for all.

Does not Spiritualism here possess all the elements of a religious belief? Are they not as pronounced and unmistakable as, and do they not possess all the force and vitality of, the religious ideas embodied in the orthodox Christian system of religion? Are not the elements of our belief, here enumerated, as intimately related to our religious natures as those of that religion are to the religious natures of its votaries? and are they not equally satisfying to our spiritual natures? are they not far more so, at least, than those of the Protestant Church? That we differ from both churches is fortunately true; but then that difference only marks different stages in the progress of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment; it is a difference of degree, of opinion as to what constitutes the true religious elements, not a denial of these elements. To me, nothing is more evident than that Spiritualism is not only a philosophy, but a religion,—a religion in the truest, best, and most comprehensive sense of the word; an enlightened, rational religion, based upon positive knowledge of

spiritual things and their relations, and not upon ecclesiastical dogma, and tradition, and blind unreasoning faith. The fact is, our religion has come to us so naturally, that many of us fail to realize that we have any. In the minds of most people religion is associated with pomp and circumstance, with form and ceremony; and, as the religion of Spiritualism has nothing of these (for these are but externals, not a part of true religion), it is only by applying the mind to the understanding of the dual character of Spiritualism, that its religious side can be comprehended.

Spirit-communion is the basis of Spiritualism. Through it a future life is demonstrated; while the nature and requirements of that life, and our duty to others and ourselves, are alike made clear to every earnest, intelligent soul. By it the demands of the heart and the intellect are alike satisfied. If the teachings of Spiritualism conflict with certain dogmas of orthodox religion, they, on the other hand, confirm all its cardinal and generally acknowledged truths. God, immortality, accountability, the necessity of good works, pure living, and charity, are as cardinal to Spiritualism as to modern Christianity. But Spiritualism is not a Saviour upon which we can cast the burden of our sins: it only enlightens our minds, makes clear our duty, and points us to the way in which we can elevate ourselves; and if, with this knowledge, we fail to walk righteously, the greater is our condemnation.

If religion consists in the belief in and reverence for God as an object of worship, of love and obedience; if it implies the belief in a future state, and

rewards and penalties in that state; if it demands of us the cultivation of a spirit of charity, of justice, and love to our fellow-men; and if it imposes on us the strict practice of virtue,—then Spiritualism is a religion, for these are its teachings; and no man can be a consistent and faithful Spiritualist who does not diligently strive to live up to them.

Spiritualism embraces “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report.” (Phil. iv. 8). “That which induces you to feed and clothe the weak and weary, to minister to the sick and desolate, not a religion? which enables you to see your goods and substance perish, and be content, not religion? which reconciles you to the death of loved ones, and enables you to say, It is well, not religion? Spiritualism is a religion standing alone.”

Christian Spiritualists also accept the definition of St. James: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” In other words, to exercise charity, to do unto others as you would they should do unto you, and to lead a pure and blameless life. “I believe,” says Dr. J. M. Peebles, “in God, in Jesus, in the Divine Spirit, in moral responsibility, in retribution here and hereafter, in the necessity of repentance, purity and holiness of heart.” And every true Christian Spiritualist believes the same.

Simple belief in Spiritualism does not make a man a Spiritualist: its teachings must be followed; we

must live as if in the presence of angels, and as near to the divine light as is possible, seeking to understand our whole duty, and to perform it. A religion that does not vitalize the soul, and beautify the whole character, is of little value. The religion of Spiritualism, when rightly understood, and its dictates followed, will confer these blessings ; for Spiritualism is *par excellence* the religion of righteousness.

Physical manifestations establish some of the most important truths upon which the religion of Spiritualism is founded, and are sought by the majority of Spiritualists as a means of confirming their faith; and, as a means to this end, few intelligent Spiritualists deny their usefulness, and even necessity. They are as much an integral part of Spiritualism as the rites and sacraments of the churches are essentials of their religion ; and any legislation opposed to the free and public exercise of the gifts through which they are produced in a direct and flagrant interference with the requirements of our religion. As to whether particular exhibitions, professedly of spiritual phenomena, are genuine or spurious, this, many times, can only be determined by those who have made the phenomena the subject of careful, critical, and prolonged investigation ; and for persons, however intelligent or learned, who have not qualified themselves by thorough examination, to dogmatically decide upon their genuineness, unless imposture is clearly apparent, is in the highest degree presumptuous ; and they are guilty of passing judgment upon questions, which, from ignorance and prejudice, they are incapable of deciding.

Spiritualists believe in revelation from God through

his instruments the angels, and through all his works. In all ages of the world, God has thus manifested ; and he to-day is speaking through numerous men and women known as mediums, and revealing to us through them his will, power, love, and truth ; and through these revelations the darkness of superstition and bigotry is being dispelled, the terrors of death annihilated, and continued existence demonstrated. Spiritualism is to Christian Spiritualists as truly a religion as the Romish is to the Catholic. In it the religious and emotional natures find their highest gratification, and the most exalted conceptions of the wisdom, love, and power of the Eternal Father, find their realization ; and nothing limits our perception of his character and attributes as therein revealed but our own finite capacities. The limitations are within ourselves, not in this glorious system of spiritual truths. That system presents to us truths so far beyond our comprehension, that, when we attempt to grasp them, we are lost in wonder at their magnitude and importance, and are overwhelmed by the sense of our own limited capacity to appreciate them.

Any religious faith that intrenches itself within circumscribed boundaries, and shuts out these new thoughts, new facts, and new lights (new to it), that admits of no spiritual growth or extension, is either dying or dead ; and, if it is not already destitute of spirituality, it soon will be, for a vital condition of spirituality is never-ceasing activity and an ever-present desire for progression. No man nor body of men possesses the whole, even of one spiritual truth ; and more light must be let in, or the little remaining will flicker and die out. The dread of new light is

a confession of weakness, of apprehension that the faith so jealously guarded can easily be overthrown. Truth is not only strong in itself ; but it imparts of its own strength and confidence to those who possess it.

It is often affirmed that a man may be strictly, conscientiously moral, and yet not be religious. In the light in which I regard religion this is impossible ; for pure and undefiled religion is the highest and most perfect form of morality, and may be represented by the two cardinal principles,—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. And every man who clearly recognizes these principles, and regards them in all his thoughts and actions, and in all his relations with his fellow-beings, is not only a moral, but a religious man ; and he is moral and religious in the degree that he succeeds in his endeavors. And even though he may outwardly deny the existence of God, yet, if he recognizes and is faithful to the collateral principle, the brotherhood of man, he is moral and religious to that extent ; and such a man, though it may be unknown to himself, in his inmost soul probably recognizes the existence, and appreciates the protecting power, of the God whom his lips deny ; and thus his actions are shaped in harmony with the first as well as the second principle.

True and enlightened religion and true morality are one and indivisible. That form of religion which is based alone on doctrine, tradition, and faith, is false ; and that form of morality which is based on selfishness, which disregards the binding force of the two principles just mentioned, is equally false ; and true religion and true morality are alike outraged by their pretensions. Good and wise spirits declare these two

principles to be the fundamental truths of both religion and morality, and they are equally fundamental to Spiritualism.

Modern Spiritualism is not only a religion, but a philosophy. It is related to and concerns itself equally with the facts and principles of both: it embraces all of truth in each. It is a fallacy, as supposed by some, that philosophy relates to the intellect alone, while religion is only related to the emotional natures of men. This is true of the present material, restricted philosophy, and much of the unphilosophical religion of the period; but true and unfettered philosophy as it will exist in the future, and true and enlightened religion, are one in purpose, though different in methods. They are alike based on truth, and are systematic strivings after the highest truth, each in its own way and by its own methods; and as all truth is in its nature divine, they are necessarily co-related, and, indeed, essentially one. The true natures, both of religion and philosophy, are at present concealed under artificial externals, and, failing to recognize their kinship, they stand arrayed in hostile attitude; but the time is not far distant when they will perceive their true relationship, and recognize the unity of their purposes. It has been truly and tersely said of Spiritualism, that "its religion is a philosophy, and its philosophy is a religion."

"Spiritualism," says Alfred R. Wallace, the eminent naturalist, "is an experimental science, and affords the only sure foundation for a true philosophy and a pure religion." And Epes Sargent, with equal truth, says, "Spiritualism is destined to be the

religion, based on science of all advanced minds." If science and religion are ever to meet on common ground, if they are to be as God designed they should be, one in spirit and purpose, it can only be by the acceptance by both of the truths of Spiritualism. This is the crucible in which they are to be tried, and all the dross of error in both eliminated; and they will come forth pure and unalloyed, and then it will be seen how beautifully they blend and harmonize as constituent elements of universal truth.

THE RELIGION OF SPIRITUALISM IDENTICAL WITH THE RELIGION OF JESUS.

"A distinguished Episcopal clergyman remarked to us," says Theodore Tilton, in "The Golden Age," "that America seemed to be feeling after a church." That to earnest and thoughtful minds the cold, formal, and speculative theology of the present day is unsatisfactory, and even distasteful, will be apparent to all who will identify themselves with the current of popular religious feeling, and carefully note its character and tendency. It will then be perceived, that there is an anxious and expectant state of the public mind, a vague but hopeful feeling that this age, so prolific in good, may not pass without the discovery or revelation of new light, of some sure knowledge of those spiritual things which now are so dark, or dimly discerned. These feelings and desires constantly find expression through the utterances even of the more advanced and thoughtful of the clergy themselves.

At the meeting of the National Council of Congre-

gational churches, held at New Haven in October, 1874, the Rev. James H. Fairchild, D.D., President of Oberlin College, Ohio, read a paper on "The Character Essential to the Religion which shall take a Strong Hold of the American People." Dr. Fairchild asserted that religion, as it hitherto has been presented, is losing its hold upon us. "Large masses of our people," he says, "are not under the control of religious sentiment. They never enter a place of worship, or manifest any need of such observance." "It requires no prophet to tell us that there is call for a revival of the religious faith of the people, a re-establishment in their convictions of the great facts and truths of Christianity." "There are indications on every side of the unsettling of the minds of men as to the foundation truths of the Christian faith." "A religion limited in its ideas, related to a single phase of human experience, belongs to a non-progressive state of society, and must be sloughed off in order to advancement." "Religion can have no controlling power with an intelligent, thinking people, without a basis in a well-considered and rational belief." "The system of religious truth that is to revive the wavering faith of the people, and settle itself in their convictions, must carry with it its own demonstration." "The religion which shall take hold of the hearts of the people must ally itself with the highest intelligence, and ask nothing of faith which reason can not grant."

Rev. Dr. Fairchild here expresses the feelings and views of thousands, both in and out of the churches. Ralph Waldo Emerson talks in a similar strain. "It is my duty," he says, "to say to you that the need

was never greater of a new revelation than now. From the views I have already expressed you will infer the sad conviction which I have, I believe, with numbers, of the universal decay and now almost death, of faith in society. The soul is not preached. The Church seems to totter to its fall; almost all life is extinct." And the words of the ablest and most independent of the English prelates, Dr. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, addressed in a recent charge to his clergy, are worthy of like consideration: "Her [Religion's] deliverance would come by the bursting out of some great school of Christian theology, *which would silence the adversaries of the supernatural*, and give its friends breathing space in which to grow calm and wise and moderate again." Rev. Dr. Hepworth, of New York also appreciates the lifelessness of the Church and the necessity of transforming its dull and formal theology into a vital religion. "It seems to me," he recently said to his congregation, "the less theology we have in the Christian Church, the better. That may be a strong statement; but I mean every word of it. If I had my way, I would not ask a single theological question of any one who desired entering the church. Indeed, few such questions are asked by the officers of this church. I thank God for that."

This stagnant and unsatisfactory condition of the Church, as unsatisfactory to its intelligent members as to its outside well-wishers, is the natural and inevitable result of its exclusion of the supernatural element, and its hostility to active and quickening spiritual influences. As Elder Evans truly remarks, "This great Christian sect (Protestantism) acknowl-

edges, and even authoritatively affirms, that revelation ceased soon after the days of the apostles, thereby effectually cutting off its own claim to be a living body, or church, any thing, indeed, but a dead body, a mere sect, that lives only upon the remembrance or record of the original and bygone revelation contained in the Bible." And these views of the Church, in our day, are the same that were held in regard to it by Wesley in his. "The real cause," he said, "why the gifts of the Holy Ghost are no longer to be found in the Christian Church, is because the Christians are turned heathen again, and have only a dead form left."

The religion taught by Jesus and his apostles was not formal and systematic, but spiritual and ethical. The God of modern theology is the God of Moses, harsh, unforgiving, and unattractive; while the God of Jesus is the God of love, the Universal Father. Ten principal commandments were promulgated by Moses; but Jesus gave another, which embraced in spirit all those: "Behold I give unto you a new commandment: That ye love one another." And, again, he says, "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." And for such a God, rightly understood and worshiped, fear can not exist; for "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment."

Jesus had that respect for the old dispensation, its laws and traditions, which every man should have for whatever is reasonably good and proper in the established institutions, traditions, and customs of his country, nothing more than this; and he was not only accused of setting aside or disregarding certain relig-

ious laws and observances, but from his own words we know he did so disregard them, as was the case in his violation of the rules respecting the observance of the sabbath, and from his declaration, that "the law and the prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God is preached."

We have no reason to believe that our civilization is indebted to Christianity for its existence; but it is evident that it could not have existed in its present advanced form, had the belief in the old dispensation been exclusively adopted by the nations of Europe. By the adoption of Christianity at the same time, the evil in the old dispensation was partially neutralized by the good in the new. The influence in the teachings and example of Jesus upon all generations since his time has been more apparent out of the Church than in it; for while the Church has practically ignored them, their truth and importance have been appreciated by purer and more spiritual individual minds, and these from age to age have proclaimed them, and excited in the minds of others a disposition to also regard them; and through these means the downward tendency of the Church has been, in a measure, restrained. The Golden Rule, to "do unto others as ye would they should do unto you," though not original with Jesus, was proclaimed by him as the fundamental principle both of religion and morality; and never since his time has there been a period when it was not the acknowledged rule of action of all truly Christian men.

The other teachings of Jesus were equally elevated in spirit and sentiment: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,

and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." "Judge not, that ye be not judged.

. . . First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them." And his life was as pure and noble as his teachings.

"If I rightly understand his essential and peculiar characteristics," says Dr. J. M. Peebles, "his pre-eminent greatness consisted in his fine harmonial organization, in a constant overshadowing of angelic influences, in the depth of his spirituality and love, in the keenness of his moral perceptions, in the expansiveness and warmth of his sympathies, in his sincerity of heart, in his soul-pervading spirit of obedience to the mandates of right, in his self-sacrificing devotion to the welfare of universal humanity, and in his perfect trust in God. The leading thoughts ever burning in his being for acceptance and actualization were the divine fatherhood of God, the universal fraternity of man, the perpetual ministry of angels and spirits, and the absolute necessity of toleration, charity, forgiveness, love, in a word, good works. These crystallizing into action, as a reform-force for human education and redemption, I denominate the positive religion, and consider it perfectly synonymous with Spiritualism,—Spiritualism as a definition and practice in its best and highest estate."

As to the mission of Jesus, it can not be better stated than it was by himself: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath annointed me to

preach the gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

The religion of Jesus consisted in the love and worship of the heavenly Father, and in doing good to his fellow-men. It was thus founded on love to God and man, was unassociated with dogma, was purely practical (not speculative), and applicable to all the relations of life and the daily actions and occupations of men. Christianity thus inaugurated continued with the apostles and early disciples a system of practical benevolence, of equality, and religious and moral reform, associated with a simple form of worship, and accompanied by spiritual manifestations, which were not only countenanced, but in every proper way encouraged. Dogma and creed were unknown to it. The greatest latitude, the largest liberty of thought and expression compatible with its simple and pure spirit, were conceded and enjoyed by its adherents. While it was thus tolerant in relation to opinions, it was rigidly exacting as to conduct. This was required to conform as nearly as possible to the teachings and example of the inspired Founder of their religion. He who earnestly endeavored to follow these was a Christian.

Jesus promised that the spiritual gifts which he exercised so conspicuously and worthily should be continued after him : "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do." And these gifts were continued with the early Christians. Justin Martyr, about one hundred and fifty years after this, wrote,

“ There are prophetic gifts among us to this day, and both men and women endowed with extraordinary powers by the Spirit of God.” Irenæus, about the same time, testifies that some “ cast out devils ; so that those from whom they were ejected, often turned believers. Others had knowledge of future events, visions, and prophetic sayings ; others healed the sick by imposition of hands.” About the middle of the third century Cyprian wrote, “ Beside the visions of the night, even boys among us are filled with the Holy Ghost, and in fits of ecstasy see, hear, and speak things by which the Lord sees fit to instruct us.” And, even as late as the fourth century, St. Augustine says, “ they ask me, Why do the miracles, which, as you say, were performed in former times, not occur to-day ?” and he replies, “ At this very day a multitude of miracles do occur. The same God who caused the signs and wonders which we read of, works similar prodigies still by such persons as he sees fit to select.”

And why did these gifts afterwards cease in the Christian Church ? The true answer was given by John Wesley, when he said, “ the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was, not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.

Primitive Christianity in its teachings and peculiar spiritual powers and manifestations, was the original form of Modern Spiritualism ; and nearly all phases of the latter were familiar to Jesus and his

disciples (see 1 Cor. xii.) Modern Spiritualism is founded upon the same basic principles as the former. They both proclaim one Father, one gospel, and one salvation for all. Primitive Christianity was based on the teachings of Jesus, and the so-called miracles which attested his spiritual mission. Modern Spiritualism is based on similar teachings and the seeming miracles that accompany them. We have established the fact that the higher teachings of Spiritualism are directly from spiritual sources that they agree with those received from like sources, through Jesus, and that phenomena of the same nature attend these teachings; and we thus establish the unity of our teaching and phenomena with those of Jesus and his disciples. The voice of Jesus of Nazareth and a host of saints speak in Modern Spiritualism, and proclaim it to be the full and glorious manifestation of that power which touched his lips with sacred fire, and opened them for the utterance of truths which the world was then unable to receive, but which found lodgment in certain spiritual natures, and have been transmitted by like minds from generation to generation to our time, when the greater intelligence and liberality prevailing furnish the conditions necessary for their reception and comprehension. Spiritualism thus unites the past with the present, and in it is fulfilled the second mission of Jesus, or Christ-spirit, to men. "Spiritualism and Christianity," said our late mortal, now spiritual brother, Robert Dale Owen, "are identical in essence; and in their essence, not in the anomalous excrescences with which ignorance or prejudice disfigures them, both will endure for ever." Jesus was em-

phatically a Spiritualist, and taught the pure truths of Spiritualism with a force and eloquence that no man before or since has equaled. He was a medium, and lived in constant communion with the spirit-world, it manifesting through him; and he suffered an ignominious death at the hands of his enemies, because he was a Spiritualist and medium. The phenomena and teachings of Spiritualism to-day are regarded by the majority of people precisely as the corresponding phenomena occurring through Jesus and his teachings were regarded by the equally self-sufficient people of his time. One class of minds that now opposes Spiritualism professes to entire belief in the divine or spiritual manifestations through Jesus, and receives his teachings—as it interprets them—as inspired utterances; while another class has no faith in those or any other spiritual manifestations, or in the existence of spirit itself. The former of these faithfully represent the Pharisees, and the latter the Sadducees, of the time of Jesus; and their attitude in relation to Spiritualism is precisely that sustained by their prototypes towards his works and teachings. The workers in the spiritual field of to-day are striving to do for modern Christianity what Jesus did for Judaism.

It may here be asked, What constitutes a Christian? The answer of the Church is Membership of an orthodox church, and belief in orthodox Christianity. But Spiritualism declares it is to live according to the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. As was said by Mr. Owen, "Spiritualism is the complement of Christianity; spiritual phenomena are the witnesses of Christianity. All thoughtful believers

in the epiphanies of Spiritualism will be Christians as soon as they learn to distinguish between the simple grandeur of Christ's teachings as embodied in the synoptical Gospels, and the Augustinian version of St. Paul's theology as adopted in one form by the Church of Rome, and in another indorsed by Calvin and Luther."

"By the true Christian religion," to use the words of Professor Brittan, "I mean the religion of Jesus, and not the poor but well-dressed effigy that appears in the temples." And, in using the phrase "Christian Spiritualism," we mean to imply that the Spiritualism of our day is the same as that made manifest to and taught by Jesus in his day, and that we necessarily receive his teachings, they being from the same source from which our highest teachings are derived, and these corroborate his. We are prepared to maintain the position here taken, and, further, to prove that we are Christians, and that true Christianity is nearly unknown in the churches. Can the body of intelligent Spiritualists occupy a more desirable, as impregnable a position, in relation to the outside world? If it can, I confess my ignorance as to what that position is; and I think it would be a task attended with much difficulty to make even a plausible showing of its desirability and practical advantages.

Christian Spiritualists contend for, and adhere to, the religious principle or element in Spiritualism. The name they have chosen is another name for religious Spiritualism, and is more definite and truly expressive than that; not that Christian Spiritualists ignore, or are indifferent to, the philosophical side

of Spiritualism, but that, by the assumption of this appellation, they declare that Spiritualism is a religion as well as a philosophy, and at the same time clearly indicate the relationship of that religion to the religion of Jesus and the early Christians.

Christian Spiritualists have not the least desire to separate, much less any intention of separating, from the main body of Spiritualists ; and doubtless all, like myself, would view with indignation any attempts in that direction. Their whole object is to give individual and collective expression to the religious sentiment, to confer and commune with congenial minds whenever the religious feelings of our nature seek expression, and, *in all other respects*, to be one in spirit and deed with our fellow Spiritualists, working shoulder to shoulder with them in advancing the interests of the cause.

The intention of Spiritualism is not to pull down, but to build up. Unfortunately some professed Spiritualists speak and act as if they conceived its mission to be a destructive, instead of a reforming and sustaining one ; to bruise, instead of heal ; to exasperate, instead of conciliating ; to make enemies, instead of friends. Spiritualism is opposed to this rash and belligerent spirit ; and it has been, perhaps, a greater foe to its progress than the combined attacks of its enemies ; and, in justice to the latter, it must be said that a very large proportion of their attacks have been incited by the exhibition of this objectionable spirit on the part of these unwise and iconoclastic Spiritualists.

This intolerant spirit, especially when manifested towards the churches, is unworthy of us and our

cause. It can be but little light such persons have received when they have failed to learn the first lesson in spiritual teachings; namely, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Though existing in the full light of Spiritualism, they seem to be insensible to its nature and influence, and to its demands on their charity and forbearance. They have yet much to learn of true Spiritualism, as they have of true Christianity; and it would become them if they have the interests of the cause at heart, to take lessons of wisdom and prudence from the example of Wesley, who, living in an age of comparatively spiritual darkness, was yet far in advance of them in true spiritual knowledge. "No confession of faith," says his biographer Southey, "was required from any person who desired to become a member" [of his society.] "In this Wesley displayed that consummate prudence which distinguished him whenever he was not led astray by some darling opinion. The door was thus left open to the orthodox of all descriptions, Churchmen or Dissenters, Baptists or Pede-Baptists, Presbyterian or Independents, Calvinists or Arminians; no profession, no sacrifice of any kind was exacted. The person who joined the new society was not expected to separate himself from the community to which he previously belonged."

Intolerance and bigotry should be left to the formal and lifeless religious organizations of society; they have no place in Spiritualism; and Spiritualists should be, at least, as tolerant as Wesley and his coadjutors, and not permit themselves to be led astray by mistaking their prejudices for convictions,

and their intolerant views as compatible with a wise and prudent spirit.

Mr. J. Murray Case, in an article published in "The Religio-Philosophical Journal," in December, 1875, truly and forcibly said, "Why is it that so many Spiritualists glory in their opposition to Christ and the Bible? I can see no reason, only hatred against everything connected with the established churches. There are those who labor more to tear down old institutions, and set the world in commotion, than they do to build up the truth. We can never elevate ourselves by pulling down our neighbor. We may reach a man in error by appealing to his reason, and presenting the truth with kindness, but never by ridicule and abuse. . . . We have nothing to gain by setting ourselves up in opposition to the Bible or Christ. That book has more evidences to support the truth of Spiritualism than any other in existence ; and we have more reasons to accept Christ as the founder of our philosophy and the head of our church than any other religious body. A vast number of Spiritualists never open the Bible, except to hunt from its pages some immoral precept, or apparent contradiction, to be used as a weapon to condemn the book. If it teaches some errors, let us show the source of those errors, and why they exist ; if it contains truths, let us present them in all their beauty ; if it contains evidences to support our philosophy, let us teach them in a manner to reach those who will not believe only on the evidence of that book."

It is but too true, as said by an English writer : "Spiritualists have run madly amuck at all other faiths, opinions, and institutions, as if they only were

the people, and that wisdom must die with them. We out-Ishmael Ishmael to all around us, and then complain, forsooth, that we are an injured, innocent, and misunderstood people. We are, in fact, still in the eruptive period of spiritual infancy."

Many who oppose the use of the phrase "Christian Spiritualism" confound the teachings of Jesus with those of the orthodox churches. In their prejudice against modern Christian theology they lose sight of the important fact that Christian Spiritualists, like themselves, deny the possession by the Church, as a body, of the true faith, while we maintain, that in interpreting the life and teachings of Jesus correctly, and in making him our exemplar, we possess that true faith which the Church, as a body, is destitute of. There are, doubtless, many Spiritualists who have suffered from the bigotry and intolerance so often manifested by modern Christians; and, if any are excusable for entertaining feelings of hostility toward the churches and their supporters, they certainly are. A sufferer from these causes last year, in writing to one of our Spiritualist journals, said, "Having received so much abuse and bitter persecution at the hands of all denominations in this town, calling themselves Christians, *the very name* is odious to me." Although it is much easier to give advice in such cases than to take it when we ourselves are the subjects of it, yet I will venture to say that it is far better to get rid of such feelings than to tolerate them, for they are the means of attracting evil influences: they poison the mind, and corrupt the judgment, so that we are entirely unable to justly estimate any thing that is related, even distantly, to the

objects of our aversion. There is reason to believe that much of the opposition to the use of the appellation "Christian," as applied to Spiritualism, has originated in these feelings of bitterness towards the churches; and this is an additional reason why such feelings should not be entertained, for upon this very question the prejudices of such Spiritualists unfavorably affect their judgment, and render them incapable of deciding upon its merits. Of such I would ask, Have we not as good a claim, at least, to being followers of Jesus, of being Christians, as these very orthōdox religionists who have exhibited such an unchristian spirit towards yourselves? and, in fact, it is not only our privilege, but, in the interests of truth, our duty, to wrest this abused and misunderstood name from them, and employ it in its true and natural relations with Spiritualism?

As before said, there is among earnest, thinking minds in the churches, a spirit of dissatisfaction prevailing; the demands of their spiritual natures are not met; and they are ready to accept the new light and knowledge whenever these are properly presented to them. And Spiritualism is a haven for such as these, who, having been educated in the churches, have come to reject their false views of the character and teachings of Jesus; and they will find their true interpretation in Christian Spiritualism. Many have already done so who continue their relations with the churches, and their numbers are rapidly increasing. And even many pulpits are filled by believers in Christian Spiritualism, who preach its doctrines, and steadily ignore the dogmas and errors of old theology: and I fully believe that the work they are thus

quietly accomplishing in educating their congregations up to the standard of Christian Spiritualism, is as valuable to the cause as their labors would be if they were its professed advocates and openly striving to disseminate its truths. I have no fault to find with the clergyman, who, becoming convinced of the truths of Spiritualism, and burning with the desire of engrafting them in the minds of his congregation, refrains from publicly avowing his belief, while availing himself of every favorable opportunity of disseminating the knowledge of these truths, of imparting to others some of the light that has illuminated his own mind. By pursuing this course he is preparing the minds of his people to receive Spiritualism whenever it is presented in a true and favorable light; whereas, were he to make a public avowal of his belief, he probably would be driven from his pulpit, and perhaps expelled from the Church; and his usefulness, if not wholly destroyed, would at least be greatly diminished.

I am well aware that some will object to these views on the ground of such a course being neither honest nor manly. I believe it to be both. It is honest, because, as a Christian minister, he professes to expound the truth to those who look, perhaps, to him alone for its exposition. This was the implied understanding with both minister and congregation when he was called by them to minister to their spiritual wants. He has discovered that many of his previous opinions and teachings were erroneous, while he has received revelations of divine truth which concern every member of his flock, and which it is his bounden duty to communicate to them. The

question that immediately presents itself to his mind is, How can I accomplish this duty? There is only one reply: these truths are of such a startling nature, so opposed to the firmly rooted errors of his people, that their full publication by him, together with the acknowledgment of his indebtedness to Modern Spiritualism, would stir to their depths the religious prejudices of his congregation; and he, and the truths he presented, would be spurned and rejected. He must either remain silent upon the subject of the origin of his ideas, and commence with his congregation by feeding them, as babes, with the milk of Spiritualism, hoping in time that their spiritual digestion may acquire sufficient strength to bear stronger and more nourishing food, or he must abandon his pulpit and flock, leaving the latter in their darkness and ignorance, and prove recreant to his highest and plainest duty.

As regards his relations with his denomination, and the Church in general, he stands committed to teach the gospel in spirit and truth, to teach the Christian religion in its purity and strength. True, there are certain dogmas in which he no longer believes, and which he will ignore; but here he is in harmony with all the enlightened minds of his own denomination; and he exercises the right, now so generally exercised by his brother-ministers and fellow-members, of regarding with different degrees of faith the different doctrines and dogmas of his church. The man, who, thus placed, thus reasons, decides, and acts, is, in my opinion, pursuing not only an honest, but a manly course; for he is nobly performing his duty, and is acting from the highest motives—the love of truth and his fellow-men.

There are two important factors to be taken into consideration when we regard the question of making converts in the churches ; and both alike seem to be ignored by many Spiritualists who are really earnest in their desires for the spread of truth. These are, first, the inveterate prejudices based on the deep-seated, life-long teachings of dogmatic theology; and, second, the fear of getting out of sight of old landmarks, of drifting into shoreless seas, and being eternally lost. The first, though often disregarded, only requires mention to be acknowledged ; but the second factor is not so generally recognized, or at least regarded ; but I am convinced that it is a tie of at least equal strength with the other in binding multitudes to the Church. This is the timid element in the churches, and doubtless comprises the majority of their members. To neither of these classes is Christian Spiritualism, when properly presented, repulsive ; for they are not called upon to desert their divine Master, Jesus, but simply to take a broader view of his life, character, mission, and teachings ; to regard these in a new, more rational, and not less attractive light, and thus reconcile the conflicting views, which in a greater or less degree, harass the minds of all thoughtful, and especially timid Christians.

It is far better to show orthodox Christians in how many respects we agree with them than to strenuously array our differences of opinion ; and many liberal and intelligent members of churches who have had their attention favorably attracted toward Spiritualism have been deterred from further consideration of the subject, and become its active opponents, from

having their sense of right and propriety outraged by illiberal and violent attacks made upon the Bible and their religion. Spiritualists who are capable of these excesses are imperfectly constituted, and, in their presentation of Spiritualism, transform its perfect features into their own likeness, and thus unconsciously substitute their own unlovely characteristics for the elements of truth and beauty which are peculiar to Spiritualism. There are two powerful weapons that are useful in the propagation of new faiths: they are unreasoning fear and reasoning love. The first it is impossible for us to wield, even if we were so disposed; and, if we would use the most efficient means, we of necessity are reduced to the sole employment of the second; and those Spiritualists who make the best use of this means, and render Spiritualism beautiful and attractive instead of hideous and repulsive, are necessarily the most successful in making converts.

It seems to me that the student of Spiritualism to whom the revealments of this philosophy and this religion have not made the character of Jesus superlatively attractive, and his pure teachings inestimably valuable, has studied and observed to little purpose. The essence of the Christ-principle is love, and we regard Jesus of Nazareth as the best exemplar of this principle; and, in selecting him as our standard-bearer, we proclaim our adhesion to this principle, indorse his teachings, and pay a merited tribute to his character and gifts. "I am not here," said Professor Brittan, "to deify the Nazarine. In all I say, I am regarding him as a man endowed with remarkable natural powers, possessed of rare spiritual

gifts and graces, whose life foreshadowed the grand possibilities of the human race. He was a medium, "clothed with transcendent brightness," whose single presence—body, mind, and spirit—bridged the gulf between two worlds. And yet many professed Spiritualists are determined we shall relinquish all claims to his mediumship. They would make him the exclusive property of the Christian Church. This is blind infatuation."

In using the phrase "Christian Spiritualism," we do not intend it to be understood that Spiritualism originated with Jesus of Nazareth, or that he is the sole exemplar of it, but that he is the highest and most noble exemplar of its religion; that through him was given its highest teachings; and that his purity of life, and devotion to its principles, distinguished him as the model Spiritualist of all the ages; and in honoring and exalting him as our ideal of human perfection, we honor ourselves and our faith in the eyes of the world, and erect a standard of excellence to which we should aspire, and which represents the highest known embodiment of the true spiritual nature.

If history be searched and studied, the peer of Jesus of Nazareth can not be found. "It is very much the fashion nowadays," says a writer in "The London Spiritual Magazine," "and amongst the American Spiritualists especially, to exalt the heathen philosophers at the expense of Christ, and to place Plato, Socrates, Pythagoros, Confucius, etc., at least on the same level with him. They find in these writers an isolated spark, here and there, of the

primal truth ; and they would fain persuade us that these little scintillations are equal or superior to the full sun of divine truth and knowledge as seen in Christ. But what says Tertullian, who lived soon after the Greek philosophers, and within less than a century and a half after Christ. "Socrates, who was put to death for denying the mythologic gods of Greece, had been previously condemned by the Athenians for revolting propensities, and was so little freed from Pagan superstitions, that, in his last hours, he ordered a cock to be sacrificed to Æsculapius, one of the idols whose divinity he had ridiculed. Thales, the prince of physicians, the great and ancient philosopher, when asked by Croesus what we know certainly of God, could not tell him, whilst the humblest handicraftman, who is a Christian, knows God, and how his greatness is to be comprehended. As to purity of doctrine, Plato taught the community of women, and recommended their striving, naked, in the public games. Diogenes and Speusippus were noted for sensuality. Pythagoras amongst the Turians, and Teno amongst the people of Priene, played the tyrants. Lycurgus thought so much more of his own fame than that of the good of the Spartans, that he determined to starve himself to death because they wished to ameliorate his savage laws. Anaxagoras refused to restore the goods left with him by his guests. Aristippus, pretending great severity of manners, in the midst of his purple, indulged himself in all kinds of excesses. Aristotle flattered Alexander, as Plato did Dionysius, for their own ends."

Jesus was the embodiment of purity, love, and unselfishness. His was a life of self-abnegation for the good of humanity ; and through him were manifested the highest and holiest spiritual influences. He was the typical medium, the pure vehicle of angelic utterances, the inspired teacher, the model, Spiritualist. If this estimate of the character of Jesus be a correct one, Spiritualists should be the last to detract from his reputation ; for he belongs to us. We alone comprehend and appreciate his marvelous gifts and virtues ; and the Spiritualism of which we are so justly proud is but the renewal, in the fulness of time, of the dispensation called Christian, another outburst of spiritual forces, which, under the more favorable conditions of this age, are uprooting and sweeping away the venerable but crumbling structures of error, and in their stead are erecting the solid and enduring monuments of truth and knowledge.

Spiritualism is no new thing. All we can claim is, that the laws of spiritual intercourse and the spiritual philosophy are better understood by Modern Spiritualists than they ever have been before. This may be unsatisfactory to some Spiritualists, whose pride and ambition would be gratified if the advent of Modern Spiritualism could be truthfully regarded as having been the inauguration of an entirely new faith. We can not claim for Modern Spiritualism originality, or an exclusive revelation. Spiritualism is as old as mankind ; in all ages it has existed, and, at certain periods, spiritual intercourse, phenomena, and revelation have appeared in a more active form,

and commanded greater attention than at others. One of the most remarkable of these epochs was at the commencement of the Christian era ; Jesus himself being the principal and central medium through whom the phenomena were manifested, and revelations made. The character of these phenomena and revelations we all understand. His teachings were up to his time, the highest and best the world had ever received ; and certainly none since, in their entirety, have excelled them ; and they never can be supplanted as long as mankind are able to appreciate the truth. After an interval of nineteen centuries we again are freely receiving through Modern Spiritualism similar teachings confirming his, the greater intelligence and toleration of this age favoring the higher and more perfect development of mediums ; and thus we are enabled, by a comparison of these teachings, to decide upon their truth with a degree of certainty never before attainable ; and, as a result, we find, that, in all essentials, they are sustained and confirmed.

With these and collateral facts before us, we are justly bound to award to Jesus of Nazareth the credit of having been the greatest of mediums, the most reliable of teachers, the purest and best of men. His advent marks the brightest period in the history of Spiritualism, and he himself was the highest type of a Spiritualist ; and how can we in justice or reason object to a public acknowledgment of his eminent superiority ? By confessing ourselves to be Christian Spiritualists we declare our high estimation of his character and teachings : it is also a declaration that

we profess to imitate his example, and make his teachings, these being identical with those of Modern Spiritualism, the rule of our daily life, as they are the ground-work of our faith.