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THE RELATION OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM TO CHRISTIANITY

By
ERNEST W. OATEN
Editor "Two Worlds."



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WEEKLY - TWOPENCE.

The Relation of Modern Spiritualism to Christianity.

An address delivered at the Ardwick Picture Theatre, Manchester, on Sunday, February 4th, 1923,

by ERNEST W. OATEN (Editor *Two Worlds*).

J. CUMING WALTERS, M.A., in the Chair.

Mr. Walters, in introducing the speaker, said rumour had it that when editors meet there must be heated differences. That would not be so to-night, for the speaker and he were in perfect accord. They were both there to bear testimony to the same great fact, and even if their points of view might differ in minor detail, they were united upon the conclusion that Spiritualism was the living factor in the religion of to-day and to-morrow. He could not understand the opposition levelled at Spiritualism by Christians; the two systems were complementary, and such opposition was inconsistent. He could understand the Roman Catholic position, since they refused to allow freedom of opinion, but Protestantism stood for a larger view, and the foundations of set creeds and dogmas were fetters they could do without.

Men were beginning to do their own thinking on religious matters. As the result of independent thinking and investigation Spiritualists were able to give a logical and decided reason for the faith that was in them. And why should they not investigate? Knowledge was growing in all departments of life as the result of search, and to forego investigation of natural phenomena was to place a premium on ignorance. He

himself had been intended for the Church, but foolish creedal restrictions cast him out, and altered his whole life. There were religious mysteries, but no good purpose was served by refusing inquiry into them. He would rejoice if the churches would examine our case, and give a fair verdict, for we could supply the very elements which were causing them to wither. One thing is sure: they will need us long before we need them. He wanted the ideals of Christianity to prevail. We seek reconciliation, co-operation, and he believed it would come, for we ought to go forward together. He believed Christianity and Spiritualism were natural partners, and had a common mission to bring the power of the spirit world into the lives of men.

Mr. Oaten said:—

Such a fine audience as I see before me (about 1,600) is an evidence of the interest which is to-day being taken in the subject of Spiritualism. The subject I have to deal with is an important one, for Spiritualism is assailed from two points—that of the materialist on the one hand, and that of the religionist on the other. The former complains that the study of Spiritualism and of the evidence for human survival is mere dabbling with forms of superstition, whilst the latter grumbles because Spiritualism apparently falls foul of his long cherished creeds and dogmas.

SURVIVAL THE PRELUDE TO IMMORTALITY.

Now Spiritualism affirms the central doctrine of Christianity, and in fact, of all religions; viz., immortality—or at least life beyond the tomb; but a great deal of confusion exists as to the exact relationship which ought to exist between modern Spiritualism and Christianity. I am dealing with this subject to-night because I have been asked to do so. I

hope to show that the Christianity of 1900 years ago was almost identical with the practice of Spiritualism to-day, but the original foundations laid by Jesus and his immediate successors has been so overlaid with traditional heathen symbology and theological priestly incrustations that it is in my opinion quite as easy to rebuild the whole structure as to attempt to clear it of the accumulated rubbish of the last sixteen hundred years or so.

Modern Spiritualism is a recognition of the fact that systematic communication has been established between this life and the life hereafter. The continuity of life beyond the grave has been definitely proven to hundreds of thousands of people—it is not a mere act of faith or article of belief, but a demonstrated fact. This lays the basis for the idea of immortality, by bringing us into personal contact with those who have survived death. Communication having been established with them, information as to the next state of life is available. Such information brings the knowledge that there exists, plane above plane, higher and ever higher degrees of spiritual beings, reaching even to the throne of the Infinite, and that spiritual revelation is and ever has been handed down to us stage by stage, according to the respective capacities of the messenger and the recipient.

We Spiritualists have opened up a contact with the spiritual worlds, where all knowledge abounds, and the measure of revelation receivable is apportioned according to our fitness and capacity.

SPIRITUALISM'S INDEPENDENCE.

That being so, we are not dependent at all upon past tradition. Spiritualism is a movement which is in present day touch with the spiritual worlds—whence all revelations have come—and having a true contact with such source, it can well be independent of all past systems. It is dependent on none of them.

The spiritual world which directed them in past times, directs us. If, therefore, all the religious systems of the world, and all the Bibles of the world, were by some calamity destroyed and forgotten, we should still be able to reconstruct on present day facts all that had been lost, since behind us is the inexhaustible supplies of the eternal spheres. That is the strength and independence of our position, and I want to make it clear. Spiritualism is based upon present day facts, and not upon past records, and in any case of disagreement, appeal must be made to the present day provable facts, rather than to past traditional beliefs. Having said that much, however, I believe that such independence is quite unnecessary. History is one of the most valuable of studies, if only because it contains the experience of others equally as sincere as ourselves. History teaches us the important lesson of what to avoid, and the history of religion contains valuable hints. My studies have led me to the conclusion that there is only one religion in the world—there never had been more. The quarrels which had arisen between sectarians was due to the fact that each had a piece of it, and each imagined that its piece was the whole. That was a type of ignorant egotism. There never had been a volume of Scripture or a phase of thought large enough to contain the whole of God's truth. In the world's great religions there were clear indications of a progressive revelation. Each religious system had concentrated on one central truth, which others had relegated to a secondary place. Even the last (Islam) had its message: "There is One God," which had been the rallying cry of the East. Spiritualism is but a younger and stronger brother of all past systems, and probably will not be the last revelation which the bounty of God will give us.

Having stated the basis of Spiritualism, I must claim that Christianity (with the exception of Romanism,

perhaps) was based upon the Bible. Spiritualists knew it, for they were continually bombarded with texts. These did not perturb them, since they could find just as many to hurl back. All religious controversialists seemed to find their weapons in the same armoury. Texts were there to suit everyone, which was what might be expected from a compilation gathered from many writers over centuries of time. The book embodied the spiritual and material experiences of hundreds of men in many centuries, living under many varied conditions, and therefore, it reflects very divergent opinions.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Deuteronomical and Levitical texts were often used against Spiritualists, but they were of little value. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." "A consulter with familiar spirits is an abomination to the Lord." Injunctions to take such people outside the city and stone them were often quoted, but the fact that the people who used these texts would not for the life of them obey the commands, somewhat negated their value. It was indeed strange that Exodus gave us the command, "Thou shalt not kill," whilst Deuteronomy and Leviticus were largely concerned with devising methods of putting to death those who offended against priestly law. It was notable, however, that not until after the Levitical priesthood had been set up were these injunctions given. The priesthood were appointed as the mouth-piece of "the Gods," and then through the lips of that priesthood prohibitions were uttered that all others should "keep off the grass." It was a mere attempt to corner spirit communication and to reserve all the power to the priests who promulgated these laws for their own protection and glory. Yet, Old Testament history bore witness to the fact that all the greatest blessings which ancient Israel en-

joyed came—not from the priests—but from the prophets. The man who cornered wheat and starved the people was an enemy of the race, but the man who attempted to corner the truths of God was an unmitigated scoundrel.

THE SACRED ARK.

A historical study of the Old Testament is very illuminating. The chief object of reverence was the Ark of the Covenant which became so holy that only the chosen of God could approach it. It was the instrument of revelation and the repository of the sacred records. It accompanied the Israelites in all their wanderings. It went with them into the Babylonian captivity; it was the holy of holies in which the presence of Jehovah was centred and through which God made His revelations. As a lad he had tried to make a model of the ark and found that it was but a wooden table with the sides boxed in, and with fitments at the sides through which two poles were slipped in order that it might be carried by bearers. Many Christians to-day scoffed at a tilting table as a means of communication with the spirit world. They had forgotten “the pit out of which they were digged.” The ark had a movable back like a cheffionier, elaborately carved, which could be unshipped for convenience of transport.

Aye, it was just a wooden table through which the communications of the “Lord” were received and transferred to the people. The boxed-in sides formed a receptacle for the sacred records and was supposed to contain the tables of stone and the tablets of the law. So holy was this sacred instrument that it was unapproachable by any but the high priest, and only under exceptional circumstances was even he allowed to open it. The mass of the people were expected to know the law, and the devout Jew prided himself upon his ability to recite it perfectly.

After the return from the Babylonian captivity there came a time when divergent renderings of the law were found amongst the people, and the sacred ark was opened in order to check oral tradition by the records themselves. The box was found to be empty! Whether the records had been stolen, or whether the bearers had jettisoned the tables of stone in order to lighten their burden is a question on which no evidence exists, but the apocraphal books of the Old Testament show that the law had to be re-written, and this was probably done by Ezra—the most erudite of the priests of ancient Israel.

It is quite possible—nay, even probable—that many of the commands for the protection of the priestly monopoly did not creep in until the re-writing of the law, for by this time the priesthood had become a powerful autocracy.

A similar condition exists with many other of the Old Testament books. Biblical scholars go so far as to say that most of the Psalms (attributed to David) could not have been written until long after David's death, and in these ancient times it was not an uncommon thing for writers and singers to apply some famous name to their own productions.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

We have the same thing happening with the New Testament. Biblical criticism shows clearly that the Books of Matthew, Mark, and John were not written by the Apostles of that name. The gospel *according to* (not necessarily by) Mark is probably the oldest, and dates 30 to 35 years after the crucifixion. The gospel according to Matthew followed shortly afterwards, but was certainly not written by Matthew. The writers of the Gospel of Luke and John in all probability never saw Jesus. Luke frankly tells us that he gathered the information as the result of enquiry amongst the followers of Jesus, and this

gospel probably dates about 50 years after the crucifixion. The Gospel of John is even later than this, and the writer is referred to by scholars as "John the Alexandrian," to distinguish him from the apostle of that name. The writer was evidently trained in the Egyptian school and familiar with the occult lore of the Nile delta, and his gospel is a mixture of his own preconceptions with the traditions the Nazarene. It was probably written A.D. 100 or thereabouts.

There was no reason why the Apostles should record the facts, since they all expected Jesus to come back in physical form and establish his kingdom on earth very shortly. The second advent was daily expected. For a time the Apostles stuck together in a little community, "having all things in common." That community soon broke up. It is the essential weakness of communism that though one thousand honest persons establish communism, one dishonest, selfish person can effectually destroy it, just as one discordant note can destroy a piece of harmonised music. Ananias and Sapphira quickly destroyed the early communists. The Apostles then drifted apart, and each aggregated round himself some few followers, to whom he conveyed the message and teaching of his Lord. They went their several ways to spread abroad the teachings dear to them.

Presently the original Apostles went the way of all flesh, and variations probably sprung up amongst the faithful in reciting the story of the Lord's life and teaching. Then would come the necessity of making records and choosing between varied versions.

WHY NOT BE HONEST?

These appear to be the rough facts, and every person who has had a modern theological training knows them; but, he asked, is there a single person present who has ever been told those facts from the pulpit?

He paused for an answer. Then why this policy of suppression? Some folk imagined that God would suffer unless they protected Him. The theologian feared that the truth would destroy their faith, but dishonesty destroyed it still more. The people can be trusted with the truth. We heard a lot about the gospel according to Matthew and Mark, but there was an inference that we had the gospel according to JESUS. He wished we had; unfortunately we have only the edited and revised oral traditions. Some of the Epistles were several years older than any of the Gospels.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

So far he had been critical, but criticism was of little value unless it paved the way to reconstruction. Despite the blemishes which destroyed the literal text of the Testament, we must not forget that the oral tradition from which the records were collated must have had a foundation. Beneath the superficial mists there was an ocean of truth, if only we could disperse the haze. He believed it would be the province of Spiritualism to re-establish the basic facts of the life of Jesus. No one could even begin to understand the Bible until he was conversant with spirit communion, for the book was largely a record of psychical phenomena. Men did not in those days understand the modern theories of spirit communion, and yet strangely enough the records of the New Testament phenomena embody details which modern research show to be only explicable by psychic power exerted in the presence of a powerful medium. He wanted them to see Jesus with his eyes, and then to ask themselves whether he had displaced Him, or whether on the other hand he had found a higher place for Jesus in the economy of God's purpose than Christianity had ever given Him. Let them examine the records in the light of Spiritualistic research.

HIS BIRTH.

Dismissing the vexed question of antecedent genealogy, we come to his birth. I do not accept the story of the Immaculate conception. Such stories were prevalent long before the birth of Jesus, both in India and Egypt. The idea commonly held that children were born in sin and that the act of procreation was a result of disobedience made it essential for these ancient peoples to postulate an alternative for their sacred avatars. The Hebrew conception that the children of men were born under the curse of God made it essential that the "Divine Being," or "Sinless One" should have a sinless birth, but such theories were not put forward till long after the crucifixion. The laws which govern human birth are part of the orderly course of nature, and are therefore the laws of God. They may be abused and thereby entail suffering, but to say that obedience to such laws constitutes sin is equal to saying that Eternal Wisdom is not wise. All laws of life must be used with reason and discretion—without license and without lust. When children are forthcoming as the result of true and honest affection between men and women of honour and responsibility they are born as divinely and as spiritually as God or nature makes possible. If Deity broke His own laws He would have no sense of justice if He punished lesser beings for doing so. I think it is more honourable to God and more in accordance with the constancy of natural law to accept the natural laws of procreation as the cause of his birth. In my opinion if his birth was superhuman and miraculous no credit attaches to him for his wonderful life. Deity cannot sin! And again, the theory of the miraculous conception would make Him different from us in his innate nature—in which case he is no example to us. A rose is not an "example" to a cabbage. Jesus was, I believe, the child of God's

own laws even as you and I are. Much has been made of the fact of his nativity in a stable. Humility is a useful virtue, but it would appear that the only reason for the event happening in a stable was that "there was no room in the inn." Hence there was no choice on the part of the parents. There is no virtue in the place of one's birth, such events have taken place in tramcars and fields. We have two stories of visitors (1) the shepherds watching their flocks by night (not on December 25th, he hoped), who heard the herald angels. A very pretty story, which might well have a solid foundation, since the "angel's song" has been the same throughout the ages. "Peace on earth, goodwill to men." He called them all to witness that the Christian world had not heard that song as yet. (2) The "magi" or wise men from the East—students of the occult—who came to worship the new life promised by the star.

FOUR DREAMS.

The birth of Jesus had been smoothed by a dream which came to Joseph, without which he might have disclaimed the paternity of the child. The "magi" called upon Herod the King, and promised to report on the finding of the child, but being warned of God in a dream, they returned home by another way. The slaughter of the innocents was resolved on by Herod, and Joseph was again warned in a dream, and fled to Egypt, returning after Herod's death had been similarly communicated to him. The whole birth story rests on four dreams, without which the child might never have lived. The modern Christian laughs at dreams and talks of heavy suppers and indigestion. He would confess that his own dreams were useless and chaotic wanderings, with little sense or meaning, but there were dreamers of different types—he had known several such, and related a case within his knowledge of an accurate forecast of unforeseen events being fore-

told in a dream. Joseph was probably a dreamer of the psychic type.

We then lose sight of the child, and later find a boy of twelve arguing with doctors in the Temple, and apparently holding his own. He had known young mediums who could do the same. What would happen if a boy of twelve were taken to the University to-day, and could hold his own in argument with the professors. They would be the first to recognise his ability, and would probably say, "This youngster has the makings of a clever man. We must take him in hand, and train him to bring his powers to their fulness." They would see that he had a proper training, and we need have no surprise that Jesus disappeared at twelve years of age, and was no more seen until he was about thirty, when he returned in the fulness of his power. Where had he been?

THE BAPTISM.

Possibly, in the schools at Alexandria, the centre of educational culture in those days, for on his return he presents himself to John for baptism—a decidedly and definitely Egyptian ceremony. The annual rising of the Nile in a hot country where there was no sanitation, had a twofold effect—it carried the filth into a state of solution and deposited it in slime upon the land, thus manuring it. The Nile flood was both a purification and a preparation for future harvests, and thus the symbol of regeneration. Jesus came to John with the recognition of his Egyptian training, but John knew he was coming, and recognised him at once; had even announced his coming. This is not strange, if we recognise the Egyptian ceremony of John. Both were probably trained in the same school, and John finished his course first. On entering on his work John knew of the greater pupil who was coming, and was able to tell of one who would soon come "whose shoe latchet

I am unworthy to unloose." At the baptism there came a light from heaven, and a voice said, "This is my beloved son." Whose was the voice? Does God speak Greek or Hebrew? It apparently was a human voice, and was understood by the hearers. It was a voice that spoke in the language of the times. He could understand a poetic allusion to the voice of God in the winds—in the roll of the breakers on the shore, or the voice of God in nature—but what voice was this? Well, we hear nothing of Joseph after the return from Egypt. We hear of the mother and brothers of Jesus, but not a word of the father. Further, Joseph was getting on in life at his marriage over thirty years before. It does no violence to commonsense to suppose that Joseph had died, and this was his voice speaking commendation of his son's work. He (the speaker) had heard his father's voice in similar manner, and the phenomenon was quite in accordance with Spiritualistic experience. He knew of no person in the universe who had a better right to be proud of a son than he who had been responsible for his birth. He believed it was the voice of Joseph expressing proud approval.

CHOOSING THE APOSTLES.

Then Jesus started on his mission, after a preparation lasting from twelve years of age until he was thirty—eighteen years. How many folks come to the Spiritualistic movement and grumble because they are not wonderful mediums in about twelve months? Talking to a lady of this type recently, he elicited that she had been a Spiritualist eighteen months, and had developed no mediumship. He pointed her to the experience of the great Nazarene. Some folk did manifest psychic faculty in a few months, but when their phenomena was compared with past records, we could draw natural conclusions as to the value of a deep and lengthy development.

He believed, however, that a close study of the New Testament record in the light of modern psychic investigation would show that the mediumship of Jesus was not so great as had been imagined. That he was a medium may be true, but he was *considerably more than that*; he was the ADEPT WHO KNEW THE LAWS of psychic manifestation, and was able to use the psychic faculties of others as well as his own. He commenced by calling his Apostles. Matthew sat at the receipt of custom. He was a tax collector, a profession which is not admired to-day, but which in those days might well be called that of an extortioner. He paid a lump sum to the authorities, and extracted what he could (cent. per cent. if possible). A man with the money instinct. Yet at the bare words, "Matthew! follow me," he left everything, and followed. This was a phenomenon in itself, and required explanation. Peter, too, busy with his fishing nets, obeyed the call without question, and the other ten, even to Judas, left everything at the call. What does it mean? You may call it in modern terms "personality," "hypnotic suggestion," or what not. He believed that it was the power of the spirit world behind the caller. Modern mediums, too, have thrown up their positions to obey the call of the spirit world. But what guided Jesus in his wonderful choice? It was not their education—they were a crude and ignorant crowd. It was not their social position, for that was negligible. Judging by the imaginary pictures which have been painted and drawn by artists, it would not appear that their personal beauty was a decisive factor, whilst their characters were very ordinary. One turned out to be a traitor, whilst the terminological inexactitudes of another were punctuated by the crowing of the cockerel. What was the reason for the choice of these men? To his thinking, the deciding factor was their possession of certain psychic gifts. A close

reading of the New Testament in the light of present day psychic experience, convinces one that the Apostles constituted a well-balanced circle, containing many varied phases of mediumship, with those positive elements which are often the accompaniment of rough natures. The physical mediumship of Peter and the sympathetic, soft and mild nature of John are but two elements which stand out from the others.

THE MEDIUMSHIP OF JESUS.

He had often heard it stated that Jesus was the greatest medium who had ever lived, but such claim was, he feared, based upon the inference that he was super-excellent in every conceivable way. He (the speaker) did not agree that Jesus was the greatest of mediums—he was far more than that. He was the master of psychic laws, who chose as his circle both those who had mediumship and those who provided the psychic elements for the best use of such gifts. He carried that circle of twelve with him, and he directed and used their powers as a great musician uses a grand organ. That he possessed mediumship is quite probable, but not all phases of mediumship. As a healer he appears to have been remarkable. As a psychometrist his interview with the woman of Samaria shows that he was successful in some degree. He appears to have unearthed her past connections with four husbands and her loose alliance with her present choice. It is not an exceptional reading, but if Jesus returned to Manchester and held a similar interview with a woman of that locality in the neighbouring park he would become liable to a fine or imprisonment for fortune-telling. (Laughter). No. No!! He did not want laughter. It was a grim fact that in a country supposedly Christian the very acts and practices of Jesus were condemned by law. The great Nazarene had some clairvoyant

power, as is evidenced by his ability to see the ass over against Bethany some seven miles away, and to even pronounce the words which would persuade the owner to release it. These gifts were good and useful, but when one comes to the recital of physical mediumship Peter occupies the centre of the picture. On the Mount of Transfiguration it was "Peter, and those that were with him were heavy with sleep." How can the Christian explain that phenomenon? Peter, James and John (not all the twelve, if you please) accompanied their Master to the Mount, and these were witnesses of the most astounding incident in their lives, the materialisation of Moses and Elias. One would think they would be all alive and intensely interested, but we are told "Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep." None but a Spiritualist can understand it.

PETER—THE PHYSICAL MEDIUM.

Well! he had been to materialising seances and had seen and handled the forms of men known to have died some years before, and in all those seances someone had been asleep (in trance or semi-trance). That person had been the medium, and the sleepiness of Peter, who is especially mentioned, is the indication of his mediumship, and that is corroborated by the fact that these physical phenomena accompanied Peter after the crucifixion. When there was levitation over water to be accomplished Peter was the one chosen, and after Calvary Peter was the central figure of the happenings at Pentecost. For Peter the prison gates were opened, etc.

They were sometimes told that the Old Testament was against the production of Spiritualistic phenomena. Moses had recorded certain prohibitions and penalties. The following is perhaps the strongest argument anent this point :—"And here I must . . .

show that Christ broke the law of Moses regarding 'seeking to spirits of the dead,' so far as good spirits are concerned. This He did in a most emphatic manner. Let the reader especially note this, for it is the most remarkable case in the sacred history, because it demonstrates, and no doubt was planned by our Saviour to demonstrate, that express abrogation of the Mosaic law regarding the spirits of the dead. Christ abrogated this law by Himself seeking the spirit of Moses, the very promulgator of that law, and leading his disciples to do the same, Christ conducted his disciples, Peter, James and John, up into the Mount of Transfiguration, and introduced them to Moses and Elias. Of Elias we need not speak, for having been translated, he might not strictly be called a spirit of the dead ; but Moses, we are told, died in Mount Nebo, and that the Lord buried him in a valley there. Yet Christ went to seek this spirit, as if the case was studied literally. He might have commanded Moses to appear before Him in His own room, but no, as the law against seeking to the dead was to be abolished, He went to the Spirit of the great dead—to Moses, the very man who prohibited such an act by the law in question, and there, on the Mount, broke the law before his face ; and by His example taught His disciples, the future proclaimers of His new law to the world, to do the same." So says William Howitt in "History of the Supernatural."

EVIDENCES OF MEDIUMSHIP.

To return to Jesus and the phases of mediumship shown by him. When he was questioned on one occasion he paused and wrote upon the ground, and then answered. Why did he write? Because he had to get the answer before he gave it. Automatic writing was to-day very prevalent, and such men as Rev. Vale Owen and R. J. Lees got their messages

from the spirit world by this means. Probably Jesus found it easier in the then conditions to get his answer by writing than by inspiration.

Or again, when on one occasion he was journeying to raise the sick, we are told "he groaned in spirit." Why should a man groan when going to do an act of healing? Your family doctor does not groan when he drives up to your house in his motor. Why the groaning? None but a medium of great power knows the unbearable tension which supervenes when the power is concentrated on him before a powerful and successful seance. He (the speaker) had often experienced it—intense irritation as of carrying a great burden often makes one shiver and groan. He had heard such on many occasions. No one but a psychic understands the fulness of such an incident. It was the symbol and evidence of psychic power.

In the healing of the blind on one occasion "he spit upon the ground and made clay of the spittle" to anoint the eyes of a sufferer. This was an insanitary action which in the present day would make him liable to a fine of 40s. and costs. Would it not be easier to touch the eyes directly? But probably Jesus knew his business best. Delayed and continuous action of the psychic force was probably necessary. and the clay was loaded with this force so that the eyes could absorb it slowly. It was easier and quicker than holding the eyes for an hour, but it produced the same effect. Of course, the blind man found trouble. They had no newspaper reporters or psychical researchers in those days, but doubtless there were as many critics as to-day. We can imagine the man who was healed surrounded by them. "How did he do it?" "What did it feel like?" "Did he know you previously?" "Will it be permanent?" and a hundred other questions and inuendoes were voiced. Some of us might well imitate

the erstwhile blind man who seemed to say, "a plague on you all." "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see."

THE MEANING OF GETHSEMANE.

But let us touch another side of the Master's character. Come with me to Gethsemane and watch the psychometrist who has sensed the tragedy approaching him. Weak and exhausted by the work he had done, his psychic power was depleted, for it ebbs and flows from time to time. Sucked dry and left alone, the iron entered his great soul, and in agony of spirit the dread of impending events overwhelmed him. The psychic afflatus gone, the poor human soul found his weak and common humanity. Who can understand it? The ship of his life had been carried on an ocean of psychic power directed by the winds of spirit presence and ministry, which were now for a time withdrawn, leaving him stranded on the sands of a common humanity. Pity, they say, is akin to love. It is here I love him best. To every soul comes its trial, to every medium his test. It had come to him. Ah! the medium knows Gethsemane, it is the opposite pole to the Mount of Transfiguration, and you cannot have one without the other. The time when the psychic needs a friend is in the "dark garden."

Stranded like a jelly-fish on the shore, the tide of psychic power having ebbed. Wearing by the stress of work done and "with coming events casting their shadows before," he sees with psychic vision the tragic end of his earth labours. He realises the weakness of some of his closest followers. He knows how much remains to be done, and in agony of spirit with brow bedewed with perspiration, his weakness finds its outlet in the unheeded call: "Father! if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from me." And then realising all he owes to those invisibles whose close

presence has hitherto strengthened him, he adds : " Nevertheless not my will but thine be done." It is the triumph of faith and confidence in the unseen as the result of past experiences. It is the triumph of the spirit over the body. What a breadth of vision came to Him in Gethsemane. With what exactness He divined it all. At the last supper he was able to indicate the coming of the end, and its horrible method? " One of you shall betray me? " " Who is it, Lord? " " He that putteth his finger in the dish with me." They all heard, and as he put his finger in the dish Judas' hand followed. Doesn't it sound silly? They had just been warned. It is easy to avoid a movement of one's hand. Why did Judas give himself away? Because in the presence of that powerful circle Judas had lost control of his hand, and was impelled to do so.

Lastly, at the crucifixion we are told that there came the sad words, " My God, why hast thou forsaken me? " The ebbing tide of sensation had caused a cessation of all reaction to psychic stimulus. The bodily senses were too weak to record it, and he interpreted this as a withdrawal of the power of the higher world. It was merely the inability of a weakening physical body to respond to the spirit power.

THE GOLD BEHIND THE GILT.

Here is my sketch, abbreviated and incomplete, of the life of Jesus as I reconstruct it in the light of psychic investigation. Men tell me I despise Jesus of Nazareth. I will trust His judgment rather than theirs, but I think I know his life more intimately than any Christian can. There is no soul in history that I hold in higher esteem. I hate the false and misleading place in which he has been put by folks who are no more able to understand him than they are to read Egyptian hieroglyphics, but I love the

man. I owe him much, and he has much to teach the world which the world can never learn until they take him from the pedestal of worship and idolatry, and walk with him in the garden.

It may be said that my reading of his life is "naturalistic." I am content that it should be so. There is nothing more divine than the laws which govern life. The God who laid down such laws made them sufficient for all His purposes and has no need to supersede them. The God who controls earthly processes is the same as He who controls the processes of spiritual life.

Despite the uncertainty of the text of Scripture, these ancients who knew nothing of psychic matters could never have made records so true to psychic laws and conditions. Hence, there must be some solidity behind it all, and the truth of his psychic life stands out beneath all the attempts to gild it beyond recognition.

PSYCHIC PHENOMENA DID NOT END WITH CALVARY.

I want to carry you on a little farther, for there are vivid differences between the life of Jesus as I see it and the presentation of it by modern Christendom. I have alluded to the failure of the Apostles' attempt at communism, but for a time they clung together. I want you to note that the psychic phenomena continued after the crucifixion. It is the evidence that mediumship belonged to the Apostles. The transition of their Master did not cause the phenomena to cease. The physical mediumship of Peter was again in evidence at Pentecost, "the mighty rushing wind," typical of physical seances, and "cloven tongues as of fire which sat upon the heads of each of them." Similar spirit lights I have both seen and handled; I have held them when they have been as hard as glass to the touch, and they have gradually dissolved and melted through my fingers, still float-

ing away as spirit lights (this was in the presence of the medium, Walter Jeune). "They began to speak in tongues." Another phenomenon I have witnessed. I have heard a working girl, who had no knowledge of any language but her own, maintain a sustained conversation in Italian with an Italian friend of mine. He was able to even locate the town to which the spirit belonged, by the provincial accent.

These phenomena have occurred in recent times as well as 2,000 years ago. And why not? "God is the same yesterday, to-day and forever," and His laws partake of His nature.

The story of Paul on the road to Damascus is a truly psychic story. He heard a voice and saw a light. There are two reports of the incident, and they are contradictory. One says that those who were with him saw the light but did not hear the voice; the other reverses the statement. I think both are probably true as relating to SOME of those present. Those possessing incipient clairvoyance had that sense quickened by the mighty outpouring, and those who were inclined to clairaudience had their special function stimulated. The two recorders of the phenomenon probably got their facts from two different observers. The whole thing is easily understood by a Spiritualist.

EARLY CHRISTIAN SEANCES.

Then came the establishment of little companies of Christians in various centres bent on communion with their Lord. They met where they could, in one another's houses and, as persecution grew, in cellars, caves, groves, in fact wherever two or three could be gathered together. Paul's epistles throw much light on the conduct of circles. One shall speak at a time. The muttering gibberish which often characterises developing circles must be suppressed, and mediums must speak in understandable language.

Such gibberish, often called a foreign language, is generally speaking no language at all, but a mass of meaningless sounds—an attempt to attain control of the medium's vocal organs. These are important sidelights on the procedure of the early Churches. These simple, earnest, faithful souls were familiar with the spirit circle—it was their form of meeting—and in the close bond thus established with the spirit world the cause grew strong. Gradually it spread: Greece, Rome and Northern Egypt, with the adjacent isles of the sea, were impregnated with its influence, and presently its strength enabled it to meet Greek philosophy and Egyptian symbology on equal terms. The testimony of history to the Christians of those early years is striking. Even those who opposed their ideas bear tribute to the honesty, morality, cleanliness, truthfulness, self-sacrifice and peacefulness of their lives. I would that so high a tribute to Christian believers could be written to-day. Alas! it cannot.

CONSTANTINE—HYPOCRITE.

In the early part of the third century Constantine came to the Roman throne. He was a strong and determined character—a fine BRUTE. A cruel, vain, harsh, immoral brute, with all the frightfulness of the brute type, and with all its cunning. He found his empire torn asunder by religious disputations. Greeks and Egyptians, followers of Appolonius, and of the mythical gods, argued and strove with one another, whilst the humble piety of the early Christians caused them to take little part in the disputation. Constantine appears not to have had a thread of spirituality in the fabric of his nature. He, however, was a cunning and resolute statesman, and finding his empire torn into sections by opposing religious interests, so that its stability was threatened, he devised means to meet the case. He evidently

noted the steady growth of the young Christian Church and the high character of its followers, and made a *profession* of conversion. Such conversion appears to have wrought no change in his character—he was as atrocious a fiend afterwards as he was before. His act was purely a diplomatic one in the interests of the peace of his realm.

From the moment of his professed conversion he moulded and manipulated the young church as clay in the hands of the potter. State recognition caused the early Christians to lose their heads. Their cause had become “popular.” The same danger threatens Spiritualism to-day—there are ever those who will sacrifice truth for popular favour.

By direction of Constantine a series of Councils were called to codify and define what was meant by Christianity, and the chief reason for such councils appears to have been a desire on the part of the king to establish a polyglot and eclectic system which should embrace *all* the forms of religious thought extant in his empire. The pure and simple PRACTICE of the early Christians was polluted and diluted with the myths, symbols and ceremonies of other systems, and a sacerdotal church set up which embraced all sects. The Egyptians and Greeks had their parthenon of Gods, and to meet them Jesus of Nazareth must not only be made a god, but “Very God of Very Gods.” No longer the simple peasant teacher, he must transcend all others in his divine nature (not merely in his teaching and practice).

THE TRINITY A HEATHEN MYTH.

The Trinity appears to have been incorporated to please the Egyptians who had their triad embodied in Osiris, Isis and Horus. This gave rise to what is known as the great Arian heresy. Bishop Arius refused to sell his principles for royal favour, and the Church split and has remained split into Greek and

Roman ever since. The Trinity was no part of the faith of the early Christians. They had probably never heard of it except as one of the Egyptian follies. In order to support this doctrine the birth of Jesus had to become complicated with the myth of virgin birth and contradictory stories of "the magi" and the shepherds.

In his "Ancient Egypt" Gerald Massey, who regarded this as his finest work, tells us the outline of a story sculptured on the walls of an Egyptian Temple as follows:—

"The story of the Annunciation, the miraculous conception (or incarnation), the birth and the adoration of the Messianic infant had already been engraved in stone and represented in four consecutive scenes upon the innermost walls of the holy of holies (The Meshken) in the Temple of Luxor (which was built up by Amen-hotep III) about 1700 B.C., or some seventeen centuries before the events depicted are commonly supposed to have taken place. In these scenes the maiden queen, Mut-em-Ua, the mother of Amen-hotep, her child, impersonates the virgin-mother who conceived and brought forth without the fatherhood. The first scene on the left hand shows the God Taht as divine word or logos, in the act of hailing the virgin queen and announcing to her that she is to give birth to the coming son (that is, to bring forth the royal Repa in the character of Aten, the divine heir). In the second scene the ram-headed god Kneph, in conjunction with Hathor, gives life to her. This is the Holy Ghost or Spirit that causes conception, Kneph being the spirit by nature and by name. Impregnation and conception are apparent in the virgin's fuller form. Next the mother is seated on the midwife's stool, and the child is supported in the hands of one of the nurses. The fourth scene is that of the Adoration. Here the infant is enthroned, receiving homage

from the gods and gifts from men. Behind the deity, who represents the holy spirit, on the right three men are kneeling offering gifts with the right hand and life with the left. The child thus announced, incarnated, born and worshipped was the Pharaonic representative of the Atensun or child-Christ of the Aten cult, the miraculous conception of the ever virgin mother imaged by Mut-em-Ua."

The story dates over 1,700 years before the birth of Jesus, and was evidently adopted to win Egyptian opinion. The devil was adopted from Persian beliefs, Ahriman, the opponent of Good.

TAMPERING WITH THE SCRIPTURES.

Times and seasons, Christmas, Easter, etc., were amalgamated into the scheme to win the adhesion of other faiths. The vestments, sacramental vessels, etc., of Egypt and Greece, were fully drawn on, whilst I believe it true that the life of Appolonius of Tyana was incorporated into that of Jesus, and the two lives made one. Appolonius was probably the greatest traveller of his time, and had roamed through the world's seats of learning, and it is no surprise to find the "golden rule" of Confucius and many of the teachings and beliefs of India and Persia incorporated into those of the new Church.

Even the sacred records were tampered with, often we believe deliberately, in order to bolster up the new scheme. There is one text in the authorised version of the New Testament which reads: "There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." It has been the sheet anchor of the Trinitarian, but it has been omitted from the Revised version. Why? Because it had no right there. It was a late interpolation inserted to bolster up the doctrine of the Trinity. From the day of Constantine all Scripture is suspect. Pre-Constantinian records, if sometimes

inaccurate owing to the oral tradition from which they were compiled, are at least honest, but once the Church became a State institution statecraft and kingcraft supplanted truth, and "the faith" was a mere tool for the strengthening of both.

These remarks may startle a general audience, but there is nothing I have said that is not known to the student. Not a word of it is even new. Constantine became a Christian and the priest sold the pass. THE CHRISTIANITY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH DIED JUST THEN, AND THE WORLD HAS BEEN WITHOUT IT EVER SINCE. That's the cause of all our troubles. The teaching of the spirit world was polluted for material ends.

BACK TO THE FOUNT OF ALL INSPIRATION.

Modern Spiritualism is an attempt at the call of the spirit world to get back to the simple faith and practice of the early Church. We can probably improve upon its methods. It would be hard to improve upon the lives of its early adherents, for their power lay in their close and conscious communion with spirit people. We want, I say, to get back to the first basis of Christianity before kingcraft prostituted it to further its own ends, if we would understand the spirit teaching of the time of Jesus.

I do not like the term Christian applied to me, only because by common custom it applies to the system of Constantine rather than to the system of Jesus. "He that believeth in me, the works that I do, he shall do, and greater works than these shall he do." Is the Christian Church doing them? Are these "signs that shall follow those who believe" characteristic of Modern Christianity? No! no! It is a dumb pretence made in a sacred name. I believe that if the MSS. of the Vatican could be opened to the world of modern scholarship the whole artificial structure would fall like a house of cards, for

the priests know the the truth and suppress it.

Let Christianity get back to the simple saintly life of Jesus and the early Church. There is its true salvation. Christianity will then rest on the same foundations as Spiritualism, viz: spirit teaching reinforced by phenomena produced through mediumship. Cut the creeds, dogmas and sacerdotalism that have overlaid the simple truth. Exorcise the demons of interest and power which have been wielded by vested interests. Let it abolish the theatrical stage trappings which hide the real players and peer behind the scenes, and it will find that religion consists in a life rather than a profession. The function and purpose of Modern Spiritualism is to take Christianity back to its founder and enable it to forget its wanderings in the wilderness.

Modern Spiritualism has been called into being to do this, and with the mighty power of the spirit world behind it, neither priests nor prelates, principalities nor powers, can prevent its accomplishment as long as Spiritualists are true to the spirit world, for the spirit message is ever the same, and the spirit world is always true to itself.

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