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CHRISTIANITY NO FINALITY;



OR,

Spiritualism Superior to Christianity.

BY WILLIAM DENTON.



BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM DENTON.

FOR SALE BY WILLIAM WHITE AND COMPANY,

158 WASHINGTON STREET.

1871.

PRESS OF RAND, AVERY & FRYE, BOSTON MASS.

CHRISTIANITY NO FINALITY.

WE surpass the ancients in almost every department of literature, science, mechanics, and art. Among the Greeks and Romans, not more than one in a hundred could read and write, and among the ancient Jews still fewer. Charlemagne of France, the greatest of Christian kings, about a thousand years ago, never knew how to write. Very few of the French clergy knew how to read, and scarcely any to write; and, in England, the condition of the people was no better. Now a man so ignorant in this country is a rarity. Where there was one author two thousand years ago, there are a hundred now; and our schools and colleges contain thousands in the embryo. Then a book as large as Shakspeare's works could only be written by the unremitting labor of a year; now a dozen men will turn out a thousand in a day. Six hundred and fifty thousand "New-York Tribunes" are printed every week; each containing as much matter as the New Testament: to write them as they did then would require the labor of a thousand men for twelve years. It took a fortune in those days to buy a few manuscripts; now a peasant has a library that a Roman emperor would have envied.

In astronomy, we have advanced from the childish guesses of the Hebrews, and the only less wild conjectures of the Greeks, to the magnificent works of the Herschels, and the splendid and all but demonstrated theories of La Place. The little world made by the Jewish Jehovah in six days; that had ends, and was flat; that rested on pillars, and was established so that it could not be moved, — is gone; and in its place we have the grand old earth, born of the sun in the eternity of the past, rushing through space sixty times faster than a ball from the mouth of a cannon. In place of the stars that were made on the fourth day after the creation of the earth, to assist in giving light upon it, and that occasionally fell when Jehovah shook the heavens, we have millions of blazing suns, some of them a thousand times larger than the centre of our system; and, compared with them, we find our planet to be but a drop in an infinite ocean. We have deciphered the hieroglyphics on the rocks, in which the history of our planet is inscribed (a history all unknown to the men of the past); have called up from their long sleep the hosts of organic forms which flourished during the geologic ages; and wrested from Nature her deep secrets, hidden for so long from the most scrutinizing gaze. Physiology, phreology, chemistry, sciences unknown to the world two thousand years ago, are blessing us daily with their beautiful and useful revelations; and the future is big with promise of new sciences to be born, new realms yet to be discovered, explored, and appropriated.

I am told that the Pyramids of Egypt are superior to all modern structures, and that they demonstrate how much the art of the ancients was superior to that

of the moderns. But let a hundred thousand men be employed for thirty years, as they were to make the great Pyramid, with the appliances of modern mechanics and art, and they would pile up a mountain like Chimborazo, whose giant crest the traveller views at a distance of a hundred miles. For every art supposed to be lost, we have made a hundred; and new ones are starting up daily.

We have to-day better houses, better heads, consequently better brains and better minds, better books, better governments, than the ancients, and why not a better religion? Having advanced in every other direction, why not in this? Are we to march forward in science with *excelsior* for our motto, looking upward, and ever climbing to the untrodden heights; and, in religion, are we to be constantly looking over our shoulders, or groping in some mummy-pit over the musty records of the past, deciphering mouldy parchments, and mourning over mutilated manuscripts, as if God had left his word to the mercy of some spreading fungus or nibbling rat?

“Why should we see with dead men’s eyes,
Looking at *Was* from morn till night?
When the beauteous *Now*, the divine *To be*,
Woo with their charms the living sight?”

As the race has advanced from its primitive barbarism, it has made for itself better and better religious forms, corresponding with its advancement. Fetichism was once the best form of religion, when men worshipped trees, stones, beetles, snakes, and more disgusting objects still.

“Then a crocodile served as a reverend lord,
And the leeks that we eat were the gods they adored.”

The soul of man could not always thus grovel: some primitive Moses, Jesus, or Luther, denounced, doubtless, as a heretic and infidel, scouted the snaky gods, and turned men's attention to the heavens. “There,” said he, “is the beautiful sun: what more glorious object of worship can you have? This makes our day; its absence, gloomy night; under its benignant reign spring up grasses, flowers, fruits, and all hearts are cheered.” Listening to him, they abandoned the old gods, danced in circles at early morn, and chanted hymns of praise to the god of day. Heroes who had slain wild beasts, and destroyed neighboring tribes who were their enemies, in turn also became gods to be adored: their deeds were emulated by their worshippers; and the exaggerated stories of their exploits were handed down from generation to generation.

Judaism at length became possible, better than some of its predecessors; for it gave to its adherents the unseen God, “the Creator of the heavens and earth,” in whose name a valuable moral code was inculcated, and the more flagrant crimes sternly denounced. But this God, though invisible, was in human shape; stern, revengeful, passionate, and, at times, terribly cruel. The Jews were his children beloved; the Gentiles, his illegitimate offspring, whom the Jews were commissioned by him to destroy whenever they interfered with their convenience or pleasure.

As men's minds expanded, the Jewish God, and the ritual founded in his name, could no longer command

their respect. Jesus inaugurates a new era, and supersedes Judaism, as the dawn does the light of the stars. God is the Father of the human race: the sun that shines on all, the rain that drops so impartially on all, are the fit emblems of his unbiassed love. The burden of superstitious rites and ceremonies, the offering of sacrifices, the sabbaths, and the yearly pilgrimages, are abolished. Faith in Jesus, and obedience to his simple doctrine, are all that the new religion demands.

But is Christianity, even as Jesus taught it, a finality? Did this Galilean mechanic exhaust the Infinite? Has Nature no deeper secrets than he revealed? Did he climb higher than mortal can ever again rise? Did he alone know the way of life, and are we doomed to walk implicitly in his footsteps, or forever go astray? So thought the Jew of Moses; so thinks the Turk of Mohammed, and the Mormon of Joseph Smith.

We dream not that we have approached the Infinite in any other direction. Ask the best musician if he has exhausted the possibilities of his science and art, and he will tell you that we have but ascended to the clouds; and the infinite heaven of harmony lies beyond, yet to be scaled, and yet to be enjoyed. The geologist knows that we have but deciphered a few torn leaves of a mighty volume, whose unread lore will feast explorers for ages to come. Ask the astronomer if the last star in the firmament has yielded to him its secrets, and the heavens have no more to reveal, and he will tell you that he is but a babe, who has made the acquaintance of a few pebbles on the shore of the ocean, whose unfathomable waters spread illimitably around him. What would be thought of the man who should

attempt to anchor us where our present attainments are in these sciences? He would be justly regarded as a foe to the human race. Was Jesus greater in religion than Newton and Herschel in astronomy, than Lyell in geology, or Humboldt in general science? We certainly have no evidence of it. If we are to rely upon the New-Testament record, and we have no other, his deficiencies, and that of his religion, are most manifest.

It is, in the first place, most sadly deficient in the ability to give to the sceptic any evidence of life beyond the grave. Judaism, it is true, was more deficient: it lacked even hope. Job says (Job vii. 9), "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more;" and certainly, if man does go down to the grave, he comes up no more: but man does no such thing. And David (Ps. cxlvi. 4): "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." And Solomon (Eccl. iii. 18-22): "I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall

be after him?" So said the grossly material Solomon, who drank the cup of pleasure to the dregs, and then called it bitter. I suppose it was in this spirit that he married seven hundred wives, and took three hundred concubines, the result of which he gives us in his despairing words, "All is vanity."

Christianity, it must be acknowledged, is far in advance of this. By the mouth of Jesus, it exclaims, "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you, that, where I am, there ye may be also." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still live, and Moses and Elias appear on the mountain, and talk. Paul says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," and "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Blessed words! — how many sinking souls they have buoyed when the billows had well-nigh gone over them! What hosts of hearts they have gladdened, as they trod the dark valley, with no light but the star of Christianity to cheer them! Let us thankfully acknowledge the good of the old, though we prefer the new: the light of the stars is joyously accepted before the morning breaks.

But how little comfort the doubter obtains from these! How meagre the evidence of future existence which the Christian can give to those who dispute it! "How know you, my brother, that you will live when this body dies; that there is a bridge that spans the broad, dark chasm of death?" We pause for his reply. "Jesus died, and rose again triumphant; and, because he lives, we shall live also." — "But how do you know that Jesus rose from the dead?" — "We have

the testimony of those who saw him after his resurrection; — the disciples with whom he brake bread after he rose, who saw, conversed with, and even handled him; the five hundred brethren who saw him at once, and never doubted his triumph over death and the grave.” — “But where do you find all this?” — “In the New Testament.” In vain the sceptic looks for what would justify such an extravagant statement. Here are accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the merest mention in the Epistle of Peter, and, besides this, absolutely nothing from any one pretending to be an eye-witness of these occurrences. Let us examine what we possess. How much of it would be taken in a court of justice?

Mark's Gospel appears to have been transcribed from previous records; and we have no evidence that the writer ever saw Jesus, either after his death or before. Even Orthodox commentators do not pretend to know when his Gospel was written, or what Mark wrote it. “Of Mark, little, certainly, is known,” says Albert Barnes the Orthodox commentator. Again: he says, “He was not an apostle or companion of the Lord Jesus during his ministry.” We cannot, therefore, accept his statement: it would be ruled out of court at once.

Luke does not profess to have been an eye-witness of any of the events that he relates: he merely professes (Luke i. 1) to set forth, in order, a declaration of what was most surely believed among the Christians of that time; and his statement can do but little more in establishing the resurrection of Jesus than the statement of a Christian's belief in it at this day.

The Gospels of Matthew and John are, however,

believed by most Christians to have been written by the men whose names they bear, who saw Jesus before his death, and after he rose from the dead; and who are, in every respect, competent witnesses. This can never be proved; but, for the sake of the argument, we will grant it.

Let Matthew be examined. "Matthew, did you see Jesus of Nazareth die?" — "I did not: when the multitude came with swords and staves to take Jesus, we all forsook him, and fled." — "What was done with his body?" — "Joseph of Arimathea buried it in a new sepulchre in his garden." — "Who went to the sepulchre on the first day of the week?" — "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" (Matt. xxviii. 1). "What did they see?" — "An angel, who said, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you!" — "Did these women see Jesus on that occasion?" — "They did: as they were going to tell the disciples, they saw him, held him by the feet, and worshipped him; and he said, 'Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me.'" — "What then?" — "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them; and, when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted" (Matt. xxviii. 16, 17).

Let us look at Matthew's testimony for a moment. An angel tells the two women to go quickly and tell the disciples of Jesus that he is risen from the dead, and goes before them into Galilee, and that they shall

see him there; and, on their seeing Jesus, he adds, "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me." What was meant to be conveyed by these commands? That Jesus was on his way to Galilee, and that he did not intend to see them till he should see them there; then that the disciples went at once to Galilee, and there first saw Jesus. Nothing else can be fairly gathered from them.

"Now, John, let us hear your testimony. Did you see Jesus of Nazareth die?" — "I did: I was standing near his mother, looking on at the time."

"Who went to the sepulchre on the first day of the week?" — "Mary Magdalene." — "What did she see?" — "She saw no one, but found that the body of Jesus was gone." — "What did she do?" — "She ran and told Peter and me; and we ran to the sepulchre, and found it to be as she had told us; and then we went home." — "What became of her?" — "She remained there weeping; and, looking into the sepulchre, she saw two angels who asked her why she wept; and, after telling them, she turned and saw Jesus, but thought he was the gardener, but, on his speaking, recognized him. He said, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'" — "What did the disciples do?" — "They remained in Jerusalem; and the same day, at evening, all but Thomas being in an upper room for fear of the Jews, Jesus appeared to them and made them glad. Eight days afterwards, he appeared to them again in the same place; and, Thomas being present, satisfied him also of his resurrection from the dead."

From John, then, we learn that Jesus appeared to his disciples in Jerusalem on the same day that he rose from the dead, and satisfied all but Thomas of his resurrection; but, according to Matthew, when the eleven disciples saw him in Galilee, *some* doubted. This must, therefore, have been before he was seen in Jerusalem; for they could not have doubted in Galilee if they had previously been satisfied in Jerusalem. To make Matthew's statement and John's even appear to agree, the disciples must have first seen Jesus on the mountain at Galilee, and then at Jerusalem: but, to do this, they must, when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary gave them the imperative word of Jesus, have gone at once to Galilee, and returned to Jerusalem in time for the evening's appearance on the same day; which would involve a journey of at least a hundred and twenty miles, to say nothing of climbing the mountain. But those were not days of railroads, steamboats, nor even stage-coaches; and we see at once, if their other discrepancies had not satisfied us, that these pretended eye-witnesses are deceiving us. In court, they would be in danger of trial for perjury.

Although we have granted that Matthew wrote the gospel attributed to him, there is good reason to believe that he never did write a word of it. Could he have seen Jesus, as John represents, on the very day that he rose from the dead, in an upper room at Jerusalem, and yet have represented that Jesus was first seen at Galilee, at least sixty miles off, and never have said a word about his appearance at Jerusalem? It is impossible.

“What have we left, then?” — “The five hundred who saw Jesus at once.” — “Who are they? Where

is their testimony?"—"Nowhere: Paul *says* that five hundred brethren saw him at once." Very different, indeed, from the testimony of these five hundred, no name even of one being given.

We have, beside this, the testimony of Peter, who is supposed to have been an eye-witness; but it amounts to little. All that he says is, God "hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;" and "God raised him up from the dead." And this is absolutely all from those pretending to have known Jesus when alive. Paul evidently knew nothing of him personally. If some of those who saw Jesus doubted,—the very disciples, while looking upon the face of their risen Master,—well may the sceptic doubt to-day, with nothing but such meagre and contradictory evidence before him as this. On what a slender thread this momentous doctrine has hung! Man's strong desire for immortality has led him to clutch at any straw to save him from the abyss of nothingness in which death threatened to plunge him, or such testimony as this never could have been accepted.

But suppose that Jesus did rise from the dead: he rose with his flesh, blood, and bones,—a proper physical man. Ho says, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." He ate broiled fish and honeycomb; showing that he was actually the same being after death as before. But we can never rise in this way: our friends have perished, if this is the only resurrection possible. Some lie in trenches in the bloody fields of the South, and their decomposing remains give verdure to the palmetto that waves over them: some sank into the turbid Mississippi, with the vessels they

bravely defended: others were lost at sea, and sharks became their living sepulchres; or were burned up in houses and ships, and the particles of their bodies have been wafted over the globe on the wings of a thousand winds. They have become parts of other human bodies; and how can these ever be recovered and re-animated? It cannot be, in the nature of things. If we had no other evidence than this, well might we weep on the death of our friends, as those who have no hope! Christianity, then, utterly fails to give to the sceptic any evidence of life beyond the grave. When he asks for evidence on the most important question that the soul of man can consider, it is silent as a skeleton, or chatters but to reveal its imbecility.

Spiritualism is, in this respect, almost infinitely superior. Christianity rests on faith, spiritualism on knowledge. The one is a historical statement, the other a living fact. Christianity says, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believed;" thus offering a premium for blind faith. Spiritualism says, "Come hither, ye sceptics: hear, see, feel, and know that your departed friends still live; and, because they live, receive the assurance that ye shall live also."

The riddle of the universe is read, the mystery of ages is revealed; the question that we have been asking with tearful eyes for long millenniums is answered in the affirmative, and we are men for the ages to come. Tell the Indian it was not all a delusion that his medicine-man taught him: the Indian lives where the pale-face interferes not with his domain, and the hell of the Christian is unknown. There is a paradise for the Mohammedan better suited to his soul's needs than the one promised by Mohammed to the faithful.

What Socrates hoped for, Jesus taught, and Paul believed, we know. Death is swallowed up in life, joyful life.

Who are the witnesses? No long-dead Peter, Matthew, or John, but living men and women, who can be questioned. Not three or four, of whom some may have been doubters; but unnumbered thousands, spread over the broad land, some of whom may be met and cross-questioned every day. Not merely the ignorant and superstitious, like the fishermen of Galilee, who seem to have been prepared for any story, however marvellous, but sceptics like the Owens, Hare, and Elliotson; such men and women as Thackeray, the Howitts and Halls, Dr. Ashburner, Lord Lyndhurst, Alfred R. Wallace, Epes Sargent, Prof. Gunning, Prof. Mapes, Drs. Hallock and Brittan, William Lloyd Garrison, Archbishop Whately and hosts of others, many of whom were convinced notwithstanding the strongest prejudice against it. Ministers in Orthodox pulpits have seen and believed, and preach now with a power on the subject of future life such as Christianity never could give. Sceptics the most determined have found their scepticism melting like snow before the sun of this truth.

Intelligent witnesses indeed we have, numbering hundreds of thousands, whose word upon any ordinary subject would be taken at once; and, if the fact of spiritual intercourse cannot be established, it is in vain to attempt to establish any very remarkable fact by human testimony.

Christianity is a miraculous religion. The earth and man are miraculously created; the earth will be miraculously destroyed; and man will miraculously

die, since the constitution of man at first was such that he would not have died if God had not cursed him. He is to be miraculously raised from the dead by the miraculously begotten and resurrected Jesus. Future life is consequently miraculous: "It is the gift of God;" and those only can live to whom it is given.

All this is sadly out of joint: it fails to harmonize with what we know of Nature in the past, and hence we may fairly presume that it does with what is to be in the future. Men are learning that the earth came to be as it is by the operation of law, and man came in like manner. As his life here came naturally, so comes his life hereafter. The spirit lives when the body dies, by virtue of its nature: it cannot do otherwise. Immortality is not the gift of a jealous Jehovah, who may, in a fit of anger, withhold it, and drop us into nonentity: we live as the sun shines, because it is its nature.

It is no wonder that a religion so interwoven with miracle miraculously changes all persons at death, so as to destroy their individuality, and give future existence not to the same individuals, but to the beings into whom they have been thus changed. Heaven is the miraculous home of the righteous few, hell the miraculous prison for the wicked many. The good alone are to be admitted to heaven; no unclean thing can enter it: but, since all men are partly good and partly bad, all who enter there must be so changed as to be quite different individuals. What wife would recognize her quick-tempered husband, what husband would know his fretful wife, when two immaculate angels had taken their places? Where are the good fit for

the heaven of the New Testament? From Abel, who was slain because he was more righteous than his brother, to Washington, the patron saint of America, there never was a good man,—never a man who did not lie, who did not at some time become angry, who was not envious or jealous or mean. If none but the good go to heaven, then it is as empty as an Orthodox church on week-days, and God is a king without a subject. Nor are there any bad men: from Cain, who murdered his brother, to Arnold, who tried to murder his country, there never was a man all bad,—one in whose heart pity never dwelt, from whose purse charity never drew a cent, nor pity from his eye a tear; who never spoke the truth when it was possible to lie, nor said a kind word or did a good deed during his miserable life. If none but the bad are sent to hell, that is just as empty as heaven.

A religion that teaches such a doctrine as this cannot be a finality. Science in this nineteenth century says to Miracle, "Away, hag of the night!" and she hides her deformed countenance. We have rent the veil of miracle that hid from us the orderly operations of Nature, and everywhere we see law and its manifestations; and, in harmony with that, we also see that men must be themselves, if there is to be any future life for them. All human beings are mixed: the sheep are not destitute of hair and beard, and might be at times mistaken for goats; the goats are not without wool, and some have a striking resemblance to sheep. From the best man to the worst, there is an infinite gradation; and Omnipotence itself can draw no line between the bad to be doomed to a Christian hell, and the good doomed to a Christian heaven. The

natural consequences of our misdeeds, in a realm without miracle, cling to us, — as much a part of us as our memory ; and not even God can rob us of the fruit of our good actions, ours to enjoy while life endures. At one blow, away go the Christian's hell and heaven : they are foreign to the universe ; and in their place we have a spiritual realm for all, where the good-doer can rejoice in the society of the philanthropic, and with them lay plans for humanity's benefit, and where the evil-doer may learn the folly of his ways, cease to do evil, learn to do well, and reap the reward of well-doing.

The temporary nature of Christianity is plainly indicated by *its indorsement of the Old Testament*. Jesus was never able entirely to outgrow the prejudices of his Jewish education. "One jot or one tittle," says he, "shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat : all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." As if the doctrine of these Jewish law-expounders was all divine ! Jesus refers to the old stories of the Jewish Bible as if he believed them ; and he evidently did : and even takes the marvellous tale of Jonah for true, and refers to prophecies of himself in the Old Testament which certainly have no existence. It is no wonder, when Swedenborg, in many respects a superior man to Jesus, was never able to shake off the biblical shackles in which his sectarian education had bound him.

Christianity, therefore, indorses the Old Testament, and drags around this shockingly offensive corpse, that is a stench in the nostrils of all intelligent and unprejudiced people. It takes this old bottle of Judaism, and

puts into it the new, and in some respects better, religion of Jesus, and, in consequence, destroys its flavor, and renders it unfit for our acceptance.

Following in their Master's footsteps, the Christians of the present day not only indorse the Old Testament and its absurdities, but also the New Testament, with some absurdities greater than the writers of the Old ever dreamed of. To be wiser than the Bible is to the true Christian impossible: to teach that it can ever be superseded is blasphemy. It is his chart; and by it he will be guided, though his judgment tells him that it is wrong a thousand times a day.

What would be thought of the geographer who should found a class in geography based upon the old atlas of Ptolemy; every one of the class signing a declaration that Ptolemy's atlas was constructed by God himself, and contained all of geography that it was necessary for man to know? What progress could they ever make? How they would fight against every new geographical discovery, and denounce every discoverer as a heretic! What an arch infidel Columbus would have been regarded by such a class in his day! Thus it was, in the time of Galileo, with the Bible believers. No sooner did he discover in the heavens what could not be found in the Bible, than he was cast into prison as a reward for his superior knowledge. To-day, such men as Darwin, Vogt, Huxley, and Spencer are looked upon with suspicion, and denounced, because they have discovered new realms that the Bible does not describe, and that make it evident that a great deal which the Bible does describe is false. They have learned that Nature is infinitely wider than the Bible writers ever dreamed, and exceedingly different from their repre-

sentations; and they may expect to be cursed by all who have sworn to be no wiser than the men of two thousand years ago.

We must say to the Bible, "Henceforth you take your place by the side of all other books. We are not to be deceived by your expanded size, your embossed covers, nor your gilded leaves. You must be content to be treated as we treat Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' Shakspeare's 'Plays,' and Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.'" And to Jesus, "You can no longer be our master. We do not object to you as a brother or a teacher: as such we will place you with Socrates, Plato, and Confucius, — just as good men in their way as you were in yours. You must not come between us and Nature, our mother, — just as much ours as yours. The man who pretends to possess a monopoly of Heaven's favors, and, in the name of God, lords it over his fellows, is either self-deceived or an impostor; and in either case is a very poor guide." To the Jewish Jehovah, "You are as truly an idol as the gods denounced in your name: they were the work of men's hands, and you of men's brains. You never made the world, or you could have informed us how you made it. Neither you nor your Son ever redeemed the world, for it is not redeemed; and the deliverance that has come to it has come in a very different channel from yours. You have long enough been a stumbling-block in the world's pathway: we move you to one side, that the car of progress may advance."

The indorsement of the divinity of the old Jewish records has been the curse of Christianity from its commencement. It prevented the disciples of Jesus from preaching it among the Samaritans and Gentiles during

the lifetime of its founder; and, had it not been for the partial emancipation of Paul, it would have strangled it at its birth. It has produced a continual warfare between it and science, which will without doubt end in its death. It curses Unitarianism and Universalism to-day. They are trying to run with heavy Jewish shackles on their legs and this ponderous Bible on their backs. Brethren, drop your Bibles; if they cannot go alone, leave them behind: snap your Jewish shackles; unite with all who are laboring to benefit humanity, taking and giving the utmost freedom: then failure will be as impossible as success is now.

With the indorsement of the Old Testament comes the acceptance by Christianity of the Jewish Divinity; and I know of no worse feature of it than this. Originally the idol of a petty tribe of sheep and cattle breeders of Judea, Jehovah became the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants. As they extended their domain by force of arms, so extended the kingdom of their Divinity, and his name became a terror to the nations round about; while the Jews credited him with all that their superior knowledge, craft, and cruelty enabled them to accomplish. The common sentiment of the Jewish nation at an early period is well exemplified in a song attributed to Moses, and which occurs in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus: "He is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name." In accordance with this, they called him "the Lord of hosts," or, in other words, the Lord of armies, and the "Lord mighty in battle." A similar sentiment was shared in by the nations round about them, who had each divinities

that they worshipped and prayed to, and to whom all their victories were ascribed.

What has the soul of the universe to do with this petty, jealous, vacillating, malignant, cruel idol of the Jews? The spirit that shines in the sun; that throbs in the heart of the distant nebula to form solar systems, as it does in that of the unborn child to form the man; that, out of the fiery hell of the world primeval, has developed plant, fish, reptile, brute, and man, and is urging the world on in that grand career of progress whose magnificent future may be estimated by its mighty past,—what relation is the sacrifice-loving, roasted-oxen-smelling deity of the Jews to this spirit? No more than Jupiter or Juno.

Jehovah is a being who cursed the earth and the entire race because the first pair fell, when he knew beforehand that they had not the ability to stand; he found the world of one language and of one speech, and, in a fit of jealousy lest they should build a tower to heaven and invade his domain, cursed them with a thousand different tongues, so that they could not understand each other's speech; he tempted Abraham to murder his own son, and, when he showed his readiness to commit the infamous crime, he blessed him, and represents him as the best man upon earth, because he was most willing to do the worst deed. He is a God that transmuted a woman into a pillar of salt, because she looked back upon her burning home, and lingeringly left her friends to perish; who hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he should not let the people of Israel go, and then slew millions of innocent Egyptians because he was so hard-hearted that he would not let them go; he gave to the Jews the grand

charter of death, — no Camanche chief's war-speech was ever worse, — "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth." He has sent all mankind into the world with a strong disposition to do evil; he allows the Devil and his agents to tempt men, and thus make them worse than they are naturally, and then has so arranged matters, that, if they persist in doing what he calls evil, he will plunge them into a den of woe, from which there is no escape, but from which the smoke of their torment is to ascend for ever and ever. And we are told that it is our duty to love this monster that the Jew made and the Christian has remodelled. Tell the captive pining in his dungeon to love the tyrant that placed him there; tell the slave to love the master who has robbed him of his rights since he began to breathe, and whose back is yet bloody from the blows of his lash; tell the mother to love the fiend who has slain her darling, and now gloats over her agony. As impossible is it for us to love this Devil-creator, this plager of the human race, this framer and jailer of hell, and tormentor of the damned. Reason will not, cannot, call him father; Love shrinks with terror from his presence; and Justice says, "Let him die, for he is unworthy to live." The gods of silver and gold, of iron and brass, will perish; the gods of wood and stone shall be no more, and their worshippers shall be ashamed of their folly: and so shall this grim, blood-besprinkled, eternally hating and torturing Jehovah die, and a million ransomed souls join in swelling to heaven his funeral-hymn.

The transient character of the Christian religion is clearly manifested by *its intolerance*. Jesus said, "He

that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : he that believeth not shall be damned ;” and, so saying, he opened the doors of persecution as wide as the Christian faith. He sowed the seed that fruited in creeds and curses, prisons, chains, blazing fagots, and all the horrors of the Inquisition ; he created hell, and placed it in the hands of priests to curse the world for ages. “ If men are to be damned for a wrong faith,” says the conscientious Christian, “ we must do our best to provide them with a right faith, and to prevent the spread of what may damn them ; and, since persecution will do this, we must persecute. Better by far to burn one man here, than that a thousand should burn hereafter.” Calvin, who burnt Servetus, acted most conscientiously, I have no doubt ; for his course was in perfect harmony with his faith. If the apostles had possessed the power, they would, doubtless, have exercised it in a similar manner. Hear Paul : “ If any man love not *the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.*” Behind that lie thumb-screw, rack, and gibbet. Again : “ If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” In other words, “ Damn every man that preaches not our gospel ;” which is a literal translation of his curse. Even the gentle John, the preacher of love, says, “ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” And the next step is easily taken, and legitimately follows : “ Take him into your prison, and thus prevent the dissemination of his ‘ damnable heresies,’ ” — a New-Testament phrase, born of intolerance. As Christianity denounces the most fearful penalties for unbelief, so has it been the most persecuting and intolerant of all

religions; and those among Christians who are farthest from this, as the Unitarians and Universalists, are farthest from primitive, genuine Christianity.

As soon as Christianity became strong enough to wield the sword, in harmony with its faith, it commenced a crusade against philosophy, and established a reign of terror over all who dared to think otherwise than as the church directed. Draper says of the Christian Church in the reign of Constantine, "They denounced as magic, or the sinful pursuit of vain trifling, all the learning that stood in the way. It was intended to cut off every philosopher. Every manuscript that could be seized was forthwith burned. Throughout the East, men, in terror, destroyed their libraries, for fear that some unfortunate sentence contained in any of the books should involve them and their families in destruction. The universal opinion was, that it was right to compel men to believe what the majority of society had now accepted as the truth; and, if they refused, it was right to punish them. No one was heard in the dominating party to raise his voice in behalf of intellectual liberty." Certainly not: this would be to tolerate another gospel, and open the door to all heresy, which might be the cause of eternal misery to millions. The belief that our future destiny is to be decided by our faith, so strenuously insisted upon by Christianity, has made Christians the most relentless persecutors the world has known. The pagan Romans, who never supposed that a false faith would damn men, were tolerant of all religions that did not interfere with the State. Since the religion that denounces most vehemently and threatens the most terrible tortures has the greatest advantage among the ignorant,

who can fear when they cannot reason, Christianity spread, crowded out and destroyed paganism and philosophy, set up its tortures, and for centuries applied them. It is true that Christians do not so persecute to-day : but the reason is evident ; they are more intelligent, and have less power. By the operation of irresistible law, the world has advanced, and superstition has been left behind in the march ; and thus Christianity and its intolerant spirit are fast being superseded, and they shall rule the world no more.

Christianity favors sectarianism and priestcraft. In Judaism, the priest is the most imposing figure : dressed in his sacerdotal robes, he is the visible manifestation of the deity, and commands the reverence of all worshippers. Jesus called himself Lord and Master, and his followers have not been slow to imitate him ; and, if the priest is not the great I AM, he is the little I am, and heathen all who reject the gospel he preaches. He prays in the name of the congregation, whom he calls " my people : " " We thank thee, O God, " " we beseech thee ; " and most of his people think that he is much nearer to God than themselves, so that, when sick, they send for him to pray, his prayers are so much more potent than their own. A man in the Christian church is a man bound to be no wiser than its creed, no broader than its intolerant spirit, no better than its impractical founder. As soon as he attempts to be any of these, the church's anathema is fulminated against him : he has committed the sin unpardonable.

I hail spiritualism as a deliverer from this priestcraft, this ecclesiastical bondage, an opener of prison-doors to the captives, and the usherer in of a new era for humanity. Here is no Moses communing with

God, who shows him his glory, but tells him to keep back the crowd, for, if they break through, they shall perish; no Jesus, the true door, denouncing all who enter some other way as thieves and robbers; no pope extending his pedal digits to be embraced by the sots of superstition; not even a priest to say "my people:" for communion with the spirit-world is open to all classes, — children of seven and old people of seventy. Peasants who never read a line are as highly favored as college-bred professors; and the sinner, in this respect, is as highly favored as the saint.

We have sects enough: why multiply them? Too long have we allowed men who never had any more authority than ourselves to drive down the stakes and enclose us within a creed-made fold. Luther found the pasture bare, or nothing left but bitter weeds; the streams soiled by the feet of millions and the impurities of ages: he looked over the pale, saw the fertile prairie in its virgin beauty, the best of pasturage, living streams flowing through it, and said to the hungry, thirsty, dog-bitten crowd, "Out where the living waters flow, and the pastures illimitable invite us to the feast." And out went a host, but only to drive down new stakes and enclose another flock. Wesley broke down the ecclesiastical barrier, and took the liberty to look for better fare; but no sooner had he found it, than the stake-drivers were set to work, the field enclosed, and the sheep solemnly warned against straying outside of the fold, where the wolves lurk to devour the straying lambs of the flock. Having taken the field for ourselves, we must allow all others the same privilege. Do not imagine, that, because we have outgrown Christianity, we have

attained the highest and best of which the race is capable; that we have learned it all, and may henceforth embody our views in a creed, build our churches, and stand at the door and bark at all outsiders. We have done little more than master the alphabet of knowledge: its literature is all but unread.

Organizations we must have for work: let them be a thousand times multiplied. We must unite, or do but little of what is so much needed: but let it be a union of free men, not for the extension of a sect, but for the enlightenment and upbuilding of mankind; in that finding our satisfaction and sufficient reward, and rejoicing in all movements that aid this, by whoever made. Sectarians look at every thing as it affects their sect: if it will help that, then they will assist it; if it will injure their sect, however much it may benefit the race, "Curse it!" they cry: "for it blesses not us!" Thus the strongest sectarians have been the most deadly foes of progress.

We must stand where we can rejoice at all progress: whatever blesses mankind cannot but be worthy of our regard. We shall herald instead of denouncing reform. We shall aid temperance, labor-reform, social science, human suffrage, and all other progressive movements: they are agencies operated by the members of our grand church of humanity. We shall unite with those who do not recognize existence after death: they are our brethren also, — many of them most noble and true, who have stood by the truth amid obloquy, reproach, scorn, and bitter persecution. I can belong to no church that excludes them or any others who are honestly laboring to benefit the race.

Spiritualists need carefully to guard against making

spirits authority. The world abounds with lazy people, who do not wish the trouble of making up their minds, and are glad to have spirits do this for them. What the spirit says is swallowed as unadulterated gospel; and one idol, the Bible, cast down, only that another many-headed monster may take its place. Nothing can relieve us from the necessity of thinking. We must allow nothing to take us off the solid ground of reason, or growth is impossible.

Nothing can absolve us from the obligations of morality, the duties which we naturally owe to ourselves and others. We must prove that we have a better religion by living better lives. When ecclesiastical bonds are being snapped, people are sometimes ready to discard even the authority of Nature herself, and disregard the laws upon obedience to which our own and others' well-being depend. Spirits cannot prevent the consequences of wrong-doing from falling upon the head of the guilty; and a spiritualist sinner will be made to suffer as certainly as an Orthodox good-doer will be rewarded. With increasing intelligence, we shall learn that the wisest man is he who knows the most of what Nature teaches; and the best man, he who most faithfully reduces her lessons to practice.

Our vessel is afloat; the sails are set; heaven wafts a prosperous gale. Science is our compass, Reason our pilot, and angels point the way. Already the goodly land appears in view. See its sunny slopes! We can even hear its music in faint tones, as it comes wafted over the breakers. There stand the friends that in youth we loved, on whose cold graves we droppd a tear. They beckon to us! No dark cloud

obscures our vision ; no mist like a curtain hides from us the home of the soul. We do not say, "I hope to join you, if God will but help me for the sake of Jesus ;" but we boldly say, "Ye, my brethren, live and love, and we shall live and love also !"

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