

CHRISTIANITY AND CHURCHISM

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Christianity and Churchism by Patrick Allan-Fraser

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ACCORDING to history, nearly nineteen hundred years have elapsed since the Founder of our faith suffered death because He told the Churchmen of His day that their teaching was not of God. Do the Churchmen of our day—those who take the name and claim the world's respect as the ministers of Jesus Christ—furnish any, even the least, evidence that they are in truth His ministers, or that they teach what He taught?

Have we had any proof given to us that an undoubting belief in, and an honest observance of, the rites and ceremonies of any Church

known to us will confer upon mankind the advantages which our Saviour told would follow obedience to the laws and commandments of God?

If we would but give to these questions our earnest attention, and permit observation and experience to guide us, we should soon, I believe, be able to perceive that those questions which have agitated, and which are still allowed to agitate, society in the name of Christianity, do not vitally concern mankind as Christians. Those questions do, however, most unquestionably concern, socially and pecuniarily, all who are professionally interested as teachers and upholders of the opinion that there is a saving or restoring moral power inherent in, and that will reach us from and through, the observance of the rites and ceremonies of our so-called Christian Church.

Before proceeding further, I must here entreat that the reader will understand and bear in mind that my object in writing this essay is not to encourage doubt regarding the truths of Christianity as these were told by

our Saviour Jesus Christ, but to show that that oral and emotional supplication for, and dependence upon, supernatural aid, which constitute the essence of our religious worship, belong not to Christianity but to Church theology or Churchism.

Let it be borne in mind that true Christianity appeals in proof of its having disclosed to man the only way by which he may become better and wiser, and ultimately attain to the power of being practically righteous, not to the speculative opinions of professional Churchmen, ancient or modern, learned or unlearned, but to the fruits borne of obedience to the instructions given by its great Founder.

Any one who will calmly weigh the sayings of our Saviour, as these have come down to our time, although in too many instances obscured by superstition and priestcraft, may see this, and also learn that He told all men to seek for salvation—in other words, the power of becoming practically righteous, not by observing the rites and ceremonies of any Church, but by rendering practical obedience

to those natural laws by and through which all men live, move, and have their being.

Hence I would argue that the teaching of Jesus Christ was not of that spiritual character Churchmen say it was, but that it was essentially materialistic in its nature. In order that we may see this, and learn that a belief in the necessity for supernatural aid is not Christian, we have but to bear in mind that it was in our Saviour's denial of supernatural power that His teaching differed most from that of the popular preachers and teachers of His time; that while those teachers and preachers taught dependence upon supernatural aid, He taught that the power of living practically righteous lives would be given to all who would obey the laws and commandments of God His Father—in other words, that moral regeneration would as a natural result follow obedience to God's will as expressed in His natural laws. Keeping these facts in view, we may readily see that true Christianity is not a mystical faith, and that that "mystery of godliness" spoken of by

professional Churchmen belongs not to true Christianity, but to Church theology, or Churchism.

Although we have not, and cannot now have, the precise words spoken by our Saviour Jesus Christ, we may nevertheless discover, from the ideas conveyed in His discourses as these have come down to us, that He did not seek to glorify Himself, as professional Churchmen do, but to make known to all men the great truth that the Creator of the universe, His Father, and the Father of all living, had from the beginning of the world provided natural means for restoring to righteousness those who, by their own and their parents' non-observance of His laws and commandments, might lose the power of being practically righteous. In order that we may have a clear perception of this truth, and understand what was the real nature of our Saviour's teaching, it is essential that we should bear in mind that at the time He appeared there existed in the Jewish mind a strong superstitious belief in the existence of an all-seeing yet unseen per-

sonal God, who worked for the good of man, not by and through unalterable natural laws, but by an arbitrary exercise of supernatural power, and with whom those who were of the priesthood claimed to possess, in right of their office, propitiatory power and influence.

That this belief in the supernatural propitiatory power possessed by the priesthood then led to much presumptuous familiarity on the part of those would-be divinely appointed instructors in righteousness, may be gathered from what we find given as our Saviour's teaching in His Sermon on the Mount. We find therein that He said, "Not every one who saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven." In these words we have clearly conveyed to us an idea of the vast difference that necessarily exists between saying and doing the will of God; and were it not for the prejudice that has been created in our minds by the teaching of Churchmen, we should have less difficulty than we have in perceiving that these words