

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM.

"A writer in an eastern publication, who is not supposed to aim at a support of heterodoxy, in his work, attempts, in an elaborate manner, to show that of all religions, Christianity to-day is most assailed, and most in danger of overthrow, though it be not subject to the religious wars which afflict some nations professing other religions."

The writer points to the fact that while Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Judaism hold a firm grasp upon the nations which profess them, Christianity is assailed by the ablest minds of the world in its very midst, and atheism, or rather agnosticism, is rapidly increasing in every so-called Christian country. He points to heterodox rule in France, atheism in Italy, the almost general unbelief among the educated classes of Russia, the skepticism of Germany, increasing liberality of England and Scotland, and the remarkable latitude allowed to infidels in America, where the laws make no distinction on account of religious belief. And he concludes from this that Christianity is likely to fail and die sooner than the older faiths whose devotees hold to them blindly and unquestioningly."

We clip the above from a recent issue of the Pittsburgh *Dispatch*, as showing that thinking Christians, though unacquainted with the fact that the nominal Gospel church is rejected of the Lord, and therefore failing to discern the cause, are nevertheless noting its rapid decline. The world sees it; *thinking* Christians see it; and only the blind worshipers of these gigantic and corrupt systems fail to see it.

The Editor, commenting on the above, remarks that, "The very fact that infidelity has so rapid a growth among Christians, where it could so easily be crushed out by law or force, is evidence that the devotees of Christianity are conscious of the strength of their belief, and that its ultimate destiny is to conquer the world--not by arms, but by gentle means. A religion which cannot tolerate opposition that pretends to be founded on reason, is a miserable faith, and can only be maintained by the grossest illiberality and persecution. Buddhism and Mohammedanism are like the old Inquisition. The infidel is hunted out of society or murdered outright. Christianity invites all fair and sensible opposition and reasoning. That Christian theologian who does his whole duty will never flinch from intelligent disputation; and if there is one fault to be still found with Christianity in its most liberal form, it is that it is yet too liable to apply opprobrious epithets to antagonists, instead of inviting them into the pulpit, there to give them an equal hearing. Too many Christian ministers act as though they fear the infidel speaker--fear that he can offer a more [R427 : page 2] specious argument than they, and fear that he will commend himself to a Christian audience more strongly than they. This is a deplorable weakness." He then adds, "Nothing is plainer than that liberal Christianity has itself brought forth infidelity, and that Christians will yet be compelled to abandon portions of their creed. *Sectarianism will have to melt away*. And when that point of development is reached where the simplest reason cannot see anything left that does the plainest violence to reason, the goal of Christianity will be reached. Then atheists and infidels in all guises will have to give up their extreme position and the factions can clasp hands in the common cause of advocating precisely those things that were taught by CHRIST, and not the forms and follies that are attributed to him by *so-called* Christians, who have no comprehension whatever of the real character of Jesus."

We agree with this Editor that the clergymen who try to defend their creeds fear and tremble before the infidel, whose reason leads to conclusions so opposite to their time-honored traditions, for which no basis can be found, either in reason or in the word of God. An infidel is an unbeliever. It is one thing to be an infidel to the nominal Church, and quite another to be an infidel to Christianity. Many so-called infidels are much nearer to both the truth of Christianity and the practice of its principles than so-called Christians.

All are really infidels who attempt to set up their own theories, and to twist some portions of the word of God to support them while they bury its plain statements to the contrary. The effort to do this has given rise to the Babylonish confusion in the Churches, all of which, though most opposite in doctrine, claim the Bible as their support. And finding that in order to gain a position of influence and respectability before the world, it is necessary to present an imposing appearance, they unitedly agree to term themselves the exponents of Christianity, and as far as possible to ignore doctrine.

It is, indeed, no wonder that this so-called Christianity, with its mass of contradictions, and its hideous misrepresentations of the glorious character of the blessed God, has made so many thinking people infidels. Neither is it surprising that this house, divided against itself, is about to fall.

Infidels conclude that as these are the exponents of Bible Christianity they want nothing to do either with Christianity or the Bible; and that any book which will support such gross contradictions, and whose teachings produce characters little or no better, and often worse than the world, must be a worthless, if not a positively harmful book, unworthily carrying an influence with it, because of its claim to be a revelation from God. And so, many conclude to discard the Bible entirely, and, as Mr. Ingersoll expresses it, to make the best of this world, and if they light on another, to likewise make the best of it, and to be happy and enjoy themselves as best they can, and let others do the same.

The whole nominal system claiming the name of Christianity is out of harmony with Scripture teaching, and her *creed-worshippers* are all infidels to the Bible. They dare not open the book before a candid searcher after truth, to whom God says--"Come, *let us reason together*"--lest it reveal truth which will overturn their cherished creed. Shame and confusion of face is coming upon, and will cover, such God-dishonoring hypocrisy. No wonder that those "who teach for doctrines the commandments of men" tremble and cower before the reasoning infidel, as well as before the earnest truth-seeker, who persistently demands a "Thus saith the Lord" for his faith. Opprobrious epithets and denunciations become their only stronghold, while they warn others of the danger of using their reason and diligently searching the Scriptures lest they become infidels. Infidels to the Bible? No--infidels to *church creeds*.

We praise God that by his grace we have been able to shake off the shackles that bind so many. Yes, we dare stand erect "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and, defying the anathemas of a lifeless Church, we declare to the world that the Bible is indeed the revelation of a glorious plan, well worthy of an infinite God, that the nominal Christianity of to-day is a gross misrepresentation of its teachings, and that the ideal character of the Bible is never even approximately illustrated by any, except those who are truly students of its sacred pages, and imitators of its grand example. Let all true children of God search the Scriptures, and be able to give a reason for their hope. Then the goal of *true* Christianity will be reached.