

Religion comes under twofold consideration, viz.: internal and external. In the former, the essence of true religion may be said to consist in religious regards to God the Father; and in the latter, the essence of revealed religion consists in religious regards to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. Now the obligation under which we are placed of paying these religious regards to each of these Divine persons, arises from the relations in which they each stand to us. Thus, then, viewing Christianity in this light, viz.: as giving us information in regard to facts which we could not otherwise have ever known, and the knowledge of which is of so unspeakable importance, it would betray fearful irreverence and folly in any one not to embrace it, or, at least, not to examine the claims of its credibility.

We shall conclude our observations on this chapter by briefly considering what is positive and what is moral in religion, and the difference between them. We are to mean by moral precepts, precepts the reasons of which we see; positive precepts are, again, those the reasons of which we do not see. This is the distinction between moral and positive precepts, considered respectively as such. But yet, since the latter have somewhat of a moral nature, we may see the reasons of them considered in this view. Moral and positive precepts are in some respects alike; in other respects, different. So far as they are alike, we see the reasons of both; so far as they are different, we discern the reasons of the former, but not of the latter. And it must be further added, that a precept may be positive, even though it have a ground or reason visible to us, if that reason do not, of itself, constitute the thing required an absolute duty.

Positive institutions come under a two-fold consideration: they are either founded on natural religion or on revealed religion. Under the former may be instanced, baptism in the name of the Father; under the latter, baptism in the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost. In drawing the line of distinction between positive and moral duties, we must be careful not to go to extremes; we must not compare them any farther than they are different. If we consider the claims of these respectively on our religious regard, we must at once hold that the former—that is, moral duties—ought to be the more strictly attended to. This will appear evident from a little consideration. Suppose that two precepts were enjoined us from the same authority,—the one moral, the reasons of which we see; and the other positive, the reasons of which we do not see. Now, if it be not in our power to observe both at the same time, it is evident we must cling to the moral precept, because we see all the reasons about it, and its moral tendencies.

The mere observance of any institution enjoined in religion, is no religious obedience at

all, but when it proceeds from a moral principle. This is plainly shown us from our Lord's rebuke to the self righteous Pharisees. They were strictly scrupulous in all their religious services, even to the letter, while they often forgot the object of their worship. Hence our Saviour says to them, quoting from one of their own prophets: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" that is, I prefer you to show mercy one to another—to manifest a loving, forbearing spirit, than mere punctilious regard to outward ceremonies. And not only in this instance, but everywhere throughout Scripture, we always find that there is greater stress laid upon the observance of moral than of positive duties.

JOHN LIVINGSTON.

FOR THE MONTHLY RECORD.

### "The Glorious Company of the Apostles praise Thee."

ST. PETER.

The Master walked at morn alone,

Beside the quiet sea,  
Whose waters bound with rippling zone—  
The shores of Galilee.

Peter was standing on the strand,  
Casting his net with eager hand,  
Yet turned to hear the new command,  
"Arise, and follow me."

And from that hour, in storm and calm,  
Obedient to this word,  
Until he wore the martyr's palm,  
He walked beside his Lord;  
Not always faithful and serene—  
Sometimes strange shadows marred the scene.  
And once amid the warfare keen,  
He sheathed his soldier's sword.

Rash and impulsive—bold of heart—  
So full of human pride—  
So open to the tempter's art—  
So often sorely tried,  
The thrice beloved—the thrice forgiven,  
Thrice rescued, though the foe had striven  
To foil him at the gate of heaven,  
Even by his Master's side.

First on whose soul the seal was set,  
The truth that makes us free;  
First to acknowledge, blindly yet,  
His Lord's Divinity;  
First to receive that glorious crown,  
The great commission handed down  
Apostleship from God alone—  
The Church's legacy.

His Master knew his ardent soul,  
A true and loving friend,  
Yet lacking humble self-control,  
He tried him to the end.  
"Though all deny thee, faithful still,  
I stand obedient to thy will,  
Firm as my name through good and ill,  
My love shall thee defend."

Rash words—for our instruction given,  
Who feel temptation's spell,  
Trusting in strength, not born of heaven,  
We know how Peter fell;