

said to be good or ill. Hence the quality of an action and the quality of an agent with respect to that action are very different things, and to be weighed by a very different standard. It is possible a man may do an action in itself good, while he imagines it to be ill; or an action in itself ill, while he imagines it to be good; but his conceptions, however grave, solemn, and sincere, do not alter the nature of either; they do not make good evil nor evil good.

Suppose the Lords of the Inquisition acting all the cruelties of that tribunal from *sincere* motives of conscience, and a full persuasion that they were doing God service, would their intentions alter the nature and horror of actions so opposed to reason and to the moral government of God? Or if in the same men such opinions and convictions exist, yet suppose for the sake of a bribe they acquit an accused criminal, who would not pronounce them depraved villains, and the vilest scoundrels; yet this character does not alter the nature of the acquittal; the act, independent of their motives, is just, equitable, and good.

Were not the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of the groves, sincere in their sacrifices and prayers, crying from mornning until the time of the evening sacrifice, "O Baal, hear us!" yet did the prophet Elijah approve their worship, because of their honest sincerity; or did he treat with tenderness or profound respect their conscientious zeal, as if an adherence to the *perfect and immutable rule of action* were alone the peculiar felicity and perfection of angels? Quite the reverse.

Were not the chief priests, the scribes, and rulers of the Jews, actuated with *sincerity*, in prosecuting the Son of God unto death, on a charge of blasphemy, and for bearing witness to *the truth*. Can we doubt that the disputers with Stephen, and the high priest and council who condemned him to be stoned—or of Saul of Tarsus, while breathing blasphemy and destruction against the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, were all actuated with zealous sincerity towards God? Though we may admit their honesty, yet with all their *sincerity of intention*, we pronounce their *opinions and actions* as most deplorable depravity, and detest them as superlatively shocking, and deaf as the adder to the voice of humanity, or to the discord of hell.

The will of God as revealed in the Bible, is the immutable criterion of thought and action, of feeling and conduct, the standard of right and wrong; therefore, how deep and pervading should be the conviction of individual personal responsibility to God, for the character and tendency of action, to the retributions of eternity. Apply these principles to the worship, order, and faith of churches, and much of the intrusive and imaginative caprice and visionary schemes of man, although having a share of wisdom in will worship, are averse to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, and captivity of thought to the obedience of Christ, should crumble to the dust. Whatever sentiment or practice in social worship is based on the cherished observance of the apostolic churches, under the approving supervision of an apostle, is equal to a *thus saith the Lord*. "He that heareth you heareth me," &c. Finally, let the honesty of man be estimated by his sincerity, but the goodness of his actions by their conformity to the above immutable rule of action.

Sir, your's,

KRITIKOS.