

the consequence of abuses and neglects in practice or of one-sidedness and exaggeration in dogmatic teaching." Can we wonder that many were repelled from the Church and the Christianity she professed to exhibit, by the narrow bigotry which saw no truth beyond its limited circle of belief, and by the cruel persecution which hunted those who were not prepared to pronounce its shibboleths, as men unfit to live? Can we wonder that many shuddered at the sound of the Church's loud anathema, and were perplexed for a time, in their choice of evils, between a pampered superstition and an excommunicated scepticism? It has been the reproach of the Church more than once in the course of her history when men asked bread to give them a stone, content to formulate her iron creeds, and build up a theoretic orthodoxy rather than to grapple with the great problems of the realm of conduct—to join issue with the demon forces that assailed humanity in the great battle of life. It is no wonder that ardent, poetic minds turned away from the days of a degenerate Christianity to the beautiful forms of ancient heathenism. To a soul yearning for some kind of spiritual communion—some voices from the invisible world, it might well seem that anything was preferable to the cold formalism and dogmatic assumption of the Church which, while still retaining the form of godliness, had lost the power thereof:

I'd rather be  
 A pagan, suckled in a creed outworn ;  
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn—  
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,  
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Nothing can be a greater hindrance to the reception of Christianity on the part of earnest and reverent men than the painful action of its professed exponents, when they attempt to embody it all within the limits of a fixed creed—useful as a stimulus to provoke inquiry, not as an iron bond to fetter and destroy it—or, worse still, when they present such glaring contrast between correct theory and narrow, unchristian life. It is not everyone who under such melancholy circumstances will take the trouble to distinguish between the form and the substance, the letter and the spirit, and, turning aside from the unsatisfying things which are seen and temporal, contemplate the pure truth of God—unseen but eternal. For Christianity is greater than the best exemplification which man can render of it, however honest and sincere his desire to carry out its matchless teaching. It is greater than the Church whose duty it is, none the less, to reflect in the midst of the world's darkness the rays of the light from heaven. It is greater than any system or formula of belief, however well articulated in its several parts or complete in its theological survey. Christianity is nothing more or less than the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not concerned with the outward surroundings but with the inward state