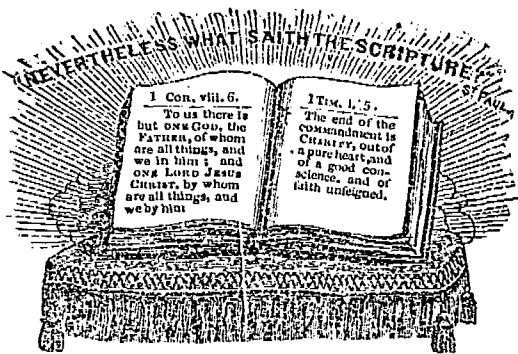


# THE BIBLE



# CHRISTIAN.

Truth, Holiness,

Liberty, Love.

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## RELIGION AND MORALITY.

You ask, is not a good moral example therefore a good Christian one? Most assuredly not. All the virtues of the moral man must go to form the character of a Christian, must be displayed by him. There can be no good Christian without them. No matter whether he believes the five points of Calvin, or the five hundred of any other man; no matter how deep and high his faith; it may still be nothing, a dishonour to his master, and a foul blot upon Christianity, without each and every trait of what is called morality. But it is not also true, that morality is Christianity, although the man of a moral life also leads a Christian life; for if a good life were all that is required, then Jews, Heathens, Mahometans, would be good Christians; for a large proportion of them doubtless are as exemplary in all the personal, and social, and civil virtues as many Christians. There are various systems of morality all differing in many particulars. They insist, it is true, on many things in common: but one lays great stress on one virtue, which another overlooks. One inculcates a duty, which another does not recognize at all. One exalts as a beauty, what another denounces as a blemish and a sin. Heathen morality, Jewish morality, and Christian morality, all aim at the same end, human virtue and happiness, but engage in its pursuit and attainment by the instrumentality of different motives. You will not say that a good Jew is a good Christian; nor a good Heathen a good Christian; and yet they may be all equally good men, equally honest, pure, temperate, benevolent, and, in their own sense of the word, devout. And they are not so, because they severally annex different meanings to the term good. It stands in each of these different systems for a collection of virtues, containing somewhat peculiar to itself, and without which, however excellent a man may be, he cannot be a good Heathen, or Jew, or Mahometan, or Christian.

Neither will you say, that the man, who has nothing to do with Christianity, except wearing its name, who is actuated in leading an irreproachable life, by the same motives as the old philosophers and modern sceptics, because it is the happiest course, or the wisest, or most advantageous, you will not say, that such a one is a proper example of the Christian life and character, any more than a good Jew or a good Pagan. He may be, nevertheless, a moral man, discharge all the duties incumbent on him, be honest, kind, merciful, benevolent, a good father, kind husband, an estimable neighbour, a most worthy citizen; but after all, he is not a Christian; and for the very simple reason, that he does not regard and illustrate in his life the peculiar Christian precepts; he does not perform those particular duties, cherish those particular virtues, which are enjoined by no other religion than Jesus Christ's, but which constitute the features, that distinguish this from every other on earth. You ask, then, wherein lies the peculiarity of the Christian code, and what does Christ require of us in addition to a moral life? He demands a religious life, that is, a life that regards God as the object of duties, as well as man. The mere moral man of the world thinks it enough to be an honourable man; trustworthy in business, and as good as his neighbours in the several relations of society, without admitting

that any thing is due from him to his Creator. He forgets, in fulfilling the second commandment, that the first and great command is to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and mind, and strength, and that it is the observance of this, with the duties necessarily flowing from it, that alone can make him a religious man and a true Christian.

In a word, Christianity treats us as beings possessed of affections as well as a sense of right and wrong. And while it holds up an upright and irreproachable conduct as a virtue, for the want of which nothing can atone, it, at the same time, and in this surpasses all other religions whatever, insists upon a deep and constant piety towards God, as the surest spring of every possible virtue. It is peculiarly a religion of the heart, and makes love to God, implying something higher than obedience and conformity to his will, and love to man, implying something more than a bare discharge of duty, the first and distinguishing features in the true Christian, and without which a man is no Christian, let him say or profess what he may.

This virtue, then, piety towards God, and benevolence towards man as its proper consequence, built upon faith in Christ, as God's true Messenger, must appear in the Christian character; nor only appear, but stand forward prominently in their own beauty and perfection. Take these away from the life and character of our Saviour, represent him to yourself as destitute of that ardent love to God, that boundless love of his brethren, which were so illustrious in him, and do you not rob him of that peculiarity, that originality, which as much as his miraculous character, distinguished him from all of whom we have ever heard? So it is with ourselves. When we neglect, or cease to cultivate the religious affections, we lose our distinction as Christians, we lose all that allies us to Christ as our head. The mere moral man, then, cannot be properly termed a Christian, because he overlooks those very things on which Christ laid an especial stress.

But if such a man cannot be considered a good Christian, much less can he lay any claim to the title, who discards the practical virtues from his system, and imagines that a right faith will stand him well, instead of what is so much more troublesome to gain and preserve. No error half so gross has ever disgraced Christianity as this; that there can be such a thing as a religious man, without being a good man in life and character; that religion can ever be separated from morality; that human virtue and endeavour are worth nothing. One would think the obvious absurdity of such an opinion would long since have caused it to be separated from any connexion with Christianity, certainly that its impiety and dangerous tendency would have deterred men from harbouring it, and have brought into disgrace the whole system of doctrine with which it is associated. But this has not been done; and we still hear of the all-importance of a certain faith in Christ's righteousness, to the exclusion of every thing else, and of the utter worthlessness of human virtue. This is strange enough, indeed, and bad enough! And I cannot but prefer to it those opinions which give a just value to human merit, as being more honourable to God, more worthy of ourselves, and better for society.—*Unitarian Miscellany.*

## GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Compare Christianity with any other religion, in the attention which it bestows upon man's daily conduct, in the fidelity with which it accompanies him down among his most ordinary occupations, and in his usual intercourse with the world, and you will find that it is the spirit of all other religions and of all those false forms which Christianity itself has been made to assume, to make only occasional and partial requisitions of human service—to leave men to themselves, except upon particular days, and with regard to particular exercises. In fact, religion, except under the liberal dispensation of pure Christianity, is a thing by itself, detached from all the concerns of life, consisting of certain observances very imposing perhaps, in the repetition of certain words, in the profession of certain formulas, or in the achievement of great and separate acts of self-denial or charity. It is altogether peculiar to our religion, according to a liberal construction of it, that it dignifies the whole life, with all its parts, public and private, social and domestic, with the name of religious duty. It teaches us, that in our daily intercourse with one another, in the humblest details, in every matter of conduct, there is a way of acting and feeling, which when a man pursues, he is entitled to the appellation of a religious man, a Christian. It assures us that a religious spirit can be expressed by a quiet and industrious attention to business, as significantly as by a prayer and a solemn rite. In the vocabulary of every other system, religion signifies something separate, sacred, apart; but to the practised ear of an enlightened Christian, it conveys a very different, a much larger meaning. It is but another word for the whole life, with all its business quietly and regularly performed, all its pleasures moderately enjoyed, and all its evils patiently borne. It is the general cultivation and happy and constant exercise of one's nature in all those ways in which it was intended to be exercised. It is the healthy putting forth of the affections around their natural objects. It is the enlargement of the character, until it is made to fill all the parts of human duty.

If you would have still further evidence how entirely peculiar it is to uncorrupt Christianity, to place the whole life, with all its occurrences, within the sphere of religious obligation, compare the Christian system in this respect with the general sentiment of mankind, and see how vastly superior it is. It is the general disposition to make great account of great acts. Our moral judgments are determined by the manner in which men act upon great occasions, and we are apt to place religious excellence altogether in the performance of striking deeds, and little is thought of the general tenor of a man's life. We can scarcely help thinking well of an individual, if we only know that he is zealous about religious forms, or that he has occasionally done some great act of generosity. Men attach little or no religious value to that form of character which may be exhibited under the common relations of society. If the most that you can say of a man is, that he is a faithful son, or an affectionate brother, or that he is inflexibly upright in his calling—this may be all very well—but it proves nothing in the general mind, as to his possession of the temper and character of a Christian.

Nothing illustrates the general feeling

on this point more strikingly than the effect commonly produced upon people's minds in seasons of great religious excitement, when men are more than ordinarily impressed. Then what a disgust is created at that domestic, household religion, that excellence which may be won and exhibited in the common walks of life! How does the excited mind nauseate a humble calling, pant to quit its lowly station, and undertake the office of a spiritual leader. If a want of the requisite qualifications, if the sex of the individual preclude, the possession of official weight, still the domestic circle will be deserted, the foot will be turned away from the familiar paths of life, and such exercises will be engaged in, as best accord with the enlivened sensibilities of the mind. The high labors of devotion and exhortation, will be undertaken upon occasions and in places which have all the excitement of publicity without the name.

Thus when men are taking the deepest interest in religion, they only show how superior the moral tone of Christianity is to their best moral sentiments. The generality of believers have not yet come up to the spiritual import of their religion. The Christian system, properly viewed, makes account of our everyday feelings, of manners even, of our domestic habits, and attaches to them a religious value, and brings them into the estimate of the character. And if men were really christianised in their sentiments, every revival of religion would be marked by an increased tenderness of conscience, not with regard to devotional acts only—the outward forms and signs of religion, but to the daily conduct and the natural obligations of human life.

## LIBERALITY OF A CHURCH-OF-ENGLAND DIGNITARY.

Archdeacon Wrangham, in his Collection of learned Discourses and other miscellanies, having devoted a sermon to the defence of the peculiarities of his own church, weaves into it a description of a faithful, anxious, and assiduous shepherd of the English fold, which he thus concludes:—

“Not overcome with evil, he overcomes evil with good. These are the lawful triumphs of Christianity. This is the Charity, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. He has seen virtuous Unitarians, and virtuous Catholics, virtuous Calvinists, and virtuous Methodists; and though he neither, with the first, affirms the Father to be exclusively the proper object of worship, nor with the second prostrates himself before a host of created beings; though he presumes not, with one class, to contract the capacity of heaven, nor affects with another, in simulated or self-deceiving ecstasies to anticipate its beatitudes,—he trusts that he is guilty of no spurious candor in professing his expectation (should he himself be accounted worthy, through that Saviour in whom he has soberly believed as the sole intercessor with God, and the Redeemer of all mankind) of seeing them again in that kingdom, whither many shall come from the East and from the West, and from the North and from the South.”

Those creeds are best which keep the very words of Scripture; and that faith is best which hath greatest simplicity.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

I choose rather to regulate my faith by what God hath delivered, than by what man hath defined.—*Archbishop Wake.*