

texts to show the wickedness of the reforms which they now have the hardihood to claim as the outgrowths of that book!

Those portions of a religious system or book revelation which are shown to be false, or which come to be repudiated by the enlightened moral sense of the age, are either absolutely ignored or twisted out of their obvious and natural meaning. By keeping in the background the teachings of the Bible which have been outgrown, by giving prominence to the precepts of morality which are attached to all systems of religion, by *stamping them all as Christian*, although they were known and practised before Christianity was ever heard of, theologians impress the masses with the conviction that the Bible and the Christian religion are the foundation of all virtue, and the only hope of the world. It then presents theological dogmas—which have nothing whatever in common with morality, which indeed have been the faith, the sincere unquestioning faith of multitudes of the most cruel and vicious men of all ages since they have been taught—and demand their acceptance from purely moral considerations!

Right here I am led to inquire what is really to be understood by Christianity. If you ask what I will give in its place, I have a right to a definition of the system which shall be marked by clearness and definiteness of statement. There is great confusion of ideas and looseness of language on this point. One says that the essence of Christianity is love; another quotes a list of beautiful precepts that the enlightened minds of all ages have taught, and he will tell you that they constitute the essential principles of Christianity. A Christian who is more theologically inclined tells you that Christianity consists in certain great doctrines and alleged facts, chief among which is that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world. Another declares that "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man" are the essence and spirit of Christianity. Thus we can hardly get the same definition from two persons who call themselves Christians.

How shall we ascertain what is meant by Christianity? We may be directed to the New Testament, wherein, it may be thought, we can find for ourselves what Christianity really is. But I reply that hundreds and thousands, distinguished for their learning, have studied this subject not only with great care, but with all the assistance which is supposed to come from prayer; and these hundreds and thousands have failed to arrive at anything like sameness of belief as to the meaning of the New Testament; nay, in many cases, and on important points, they have come to conclusions diametrically opposite. We see the Roman Catholic consigning to everlasting punishment the different Protestant denominations; the Protestants almost a unit in denouncing the Roman Catholic church as the harlot of the world; while all the evangelical denominations are more or less hostile one to another. Yet, I doubt not, all are equally sincere, and all, or nearly all, have for representatives men learned, pious and desirous of teaching the true faith. Thus is illustrated the utter inability of the human mind, accepting the Bible as the word of God, to come to any uniformity of belief as to what Christianity really is. We find denominations founded upon different contradictory doctrines, all claimed to form an important part of Christianity by their respective adherents.

(To be continued.)