

in a flippant and supercilious tone deal with questions of the most momentous interest. They persistently teach that if men were freed from Scriptural creeds and dogmatic beliefs they would become the subjects of higher impulses, which would lead to purer forms of life. They misrepresent and caricature those types of character which have been formed under the influences of a genuine and earnest belief, and sneer complacently at the characters whom they portray as the representatives of religious men and women. These Transcendentalists would put in the room of Christian doctrine a theory of the perfectability of human nature, and its self-sufficiency in all things. The true answer to this is an appeal to the facts of human life—to their own pictures of individual life and character, even when what they call the superstitious beliefs of Christianity are wanting, which are black with the shadows of moral as well as physical evil. At this point they take refuge in the theory which sinks the individual in the mass, and maintain that what is not true of the single man is true of the aggregate of mankind. Here all is confusion, for who can conceive of a whole without parts, an aggregate without individuals, or if you will, a perfect whole made up of imperfect parts—a perfect humanity made up of individuals who are singly bad and degraded.

Let the question be asked, Whether among those who have accepted the Christian creed or among those who have not accepted it, the highest types of character have been found? The answer must be in favour of Christian doctrine; and it is surely unphilosophical, to say the least of it, to exclude those religious beliefs from having had any share in the formation of character.

Those men who speak of Christian creeds with contemptuous pity yet claim to be Christians upon the plea that Christianity is not a doctrine but a life. Their favourite motto is—

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight—
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

As if a Christian life were a negation of Christian doctrine, or could exist in ignorance, hatred, rejection of or non-conformity to Christian truth.