

—that they, like we are, may be "FILLED with all JOY and PEACE in believing. z. n. —Star in the West.

Religion is Goodness.

A distinguished infidel once said, with a scornful degree of truth, that if we are told a man is religious, we still ask, what are his morals? A similar remark was once made to me by an intelligent and excellent Unitarian clergyman. In confirmation of what I have said respecting the prevalence of a religion which had no connexion with goodness, he remarked, that some people seem to have more religion than goodness, and others more goodness than religion. I was glad to find a clergyman of such respectability, holding the relation he did, prepared to speak out with so much decision and boldness against the spurious, affected piety of the present age. I was also glad to find him ready to measure a man's religion, not by the soundness of his countenance, the length of his prayers, his assent to dogmas, or his party zeal, but by his goodness; by the righteousness of his life; by his deeds of mercy and love, by his regard for truth and principle; by his readiness to obey the commands of God.

How this mock religion ever gained such currency and secured such an influence in the church, I am wholly unable to conceive; for sure I am that it has no authority in the Holy Scriptures, neither has it any practical value or any power to confer happiness.

The religion of which I speak, is supposed to dwell as a secret with a certain part of Christendom. Those to whom this secret has been entrusted, claim a superhuman excellence, an exclusive right to the Christian name and the favor of God. It is said to come upon them in a mysterious manner, to have dropped down from the skies in an unexpected moment, and to exist within them in a state entirely separate and distinct from the general conduct of the understanding.

It is also supposed to be something altogether inexplicable, an enigma which cannot be explained. So mysterious and wonderful is this religion, that people have not unfrequently sought it for the purpose of gratifying their curiosity. I am anxious to know what this secret is, say many who have gone to the anxious bench, and submitted to the regimen requisite to secure this heavenly visitant, this divine afflatus. "I like your preaching," said a lady to me once; "my reason teaches me that you preach the truth, my heart has been deeply affected by the sublime, and touching, and cheering sentiments which you hold; but I am told that in the Rev. Mr. T.'s meeting something different is obtained from what you have among your people; that religion is poured there right down into the soul, and that if I attend there God will be thus gracious to me; and I am curious to know what it is these persons receive, and how they feel, and I am resolved to gratify this pressing curiosity."

From all this we dissent. The notion to which we object is this,—that religion is something separate from the mind and heart; that it can be poured into the soul just as a fluid can be poured into a vessel, and that it can exist within us without controlling the feelings or directing the steps.

This is the popular idea, and to this we object. We believe a greater or more pernicious error could not prevail, and that all who entertain such an opinion are doing an incalculable injury to the simple and beautiful religion of the Saviour. We have many reasons to offer against this idea of religion.

1. It contradicts all our ideas of the philosophy of the human soul? What is the soul? You answer, it is that part of man when reason, knows, loves, and is exercised with emotions of tenderness, gratitude, and praise. It is capable of being made acquainted with the Infinite Father, lifted up on the wings of devotion to his everlasting throne, and of being bound by the strongest ties of affection to friends and acquaintances. But how is it that the soul does and feels all this? Surely not by having communicated to it some foreign quality, but by being operated upon through the power of truth. How is it that the soul is made acquainted with astronomy, geology, and philosophy? Is it not by the perusal of works in which the principles of these different sciences are unfolded? We say such a man is a great astronomer, philosopher, or geologist; but we do not mean by this that anything exists within him distinct and separate from his soul. All we mean is, that by the exercise of his powers he has obtained this knowledge. So when we say a man has religion, we do not mean that some strange, and unaccountable, and indefinable thing has been communicated to him; but we mean that the man has obtained religious knowledge and feeling,—that the gospel has so operated upon his soul as to render him

wise unto salvation. That we are right in these views is unquestionable, for religion is said to be a knowledge of God and his Son; love to God and man,—right feeling and right action. A man is religious, therefore, just in proportion as he is wise and good,—he is religious in proportion as his soul is brought under the influence of the gospel. Thus we read, "Whoso loveth is born of God. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." &c.

2. That religion is not something mysterious that is conveyed to the soul, is evident from the office of the gospel. According to all the representations of the Bible, the gospel is fitted to enlighten the mind, elevate the affections, and direct the steps of man. Hence it is termed a lamp to our feet and a light to our path,—a light to those sitting in darkness and the region of the shadow of death; the bread of God which giveth life unto the world; a fountain of living water, of which a man may drink and never thirst; an anchor by which the soul is kept secure while tossed on the ocean of life; an unfailling fountain, in which we can wash away all our impurities.

Such is the great office of the gospel.—According to this, there is an intimate connexion between the gospel and the existence of religion in the soul. Religion is produced naturally and directly by the agency of the sublime and hallowing truths of the gospel.—He who the Bible says, a young man shall cleanse his ways, by taking heed to his steps according to God's word. It calls upon sinners to return from their wanderings; to give their hearts to God; to walk in his commandments blameless; to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; and it represents all who thus hearken to this divine call as children of God, disciples of Jesus, Christians, and speaks of them as having been born into the kingdom of light and grace. In all this, however, we have no intimation that a secret is conveyed to their souls, and that they become Christians in consequence of having obtained this secret.—Neither is there any intimation that the gospel has no natural tendency to purify the heart and produce newness of life; that there is no connexion between the gospel and the Christian character, or that religion is a secret conveyed to the soul by a special and arbitrary act of God, and without the agency of divine truth. All we know of the gospel is against the idea that a mysterious something takes up its residence within us when we become Christians, and that to the existence of that mystery, we are indebted for our Christian character. The gospel illuminates the soul, sanctifies the affections, fans into a flame the native spark of goodness which we have within us, and rears into life and beauty the germ which God has placed in all hearts. Thus we read, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." &c. after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

3. That religion is not something mysterious conveyed to the soul; is evident, because God could not justly require us to obtain that of which we can have no conception. This is a self-evident proposition. A commandment which is a mystery is a solecism,—a self-contradiction. Suppose a voice speaks to me from the skies, giving a command which I am wholly unable to understand.—I ponder upon it,—I make it the subject of serious reflection, but I can form no idea of its meaning or what it requires,—could it be in any just sense a command to me; and could I properly be considered blameworthy for not complying with it? No; every person will say No. And yet such is the case with the command requiring us to seek religion, and to become religious, if religion is a secret, an indefinable, inexplicable mystery! But suppose religion is love to God and man,—doing as we would be done by,—overcoming evil with good,—rendering blessing for cursing; suppose it is gentleness, brotherly affection, good-will, honesty, gratitude, faith, hope, charity, then the command requiring us to become Christians is perfectly intelligible and reasonable; for we have within us a perception of what these virtues are,—we have the germs of them in the soul. If, however, we had not the germs of them in the soul, it would be impossible to have any conception of what he has never felt, or seen, or known by some one of the senses. Hence, according to the popular opinion, when you ask a man to become a Christian, you ask an utter impossibility; he can form no conception of your requisition than a blind man of colors, or a deaf man of sounds.

Religion, then, is benevolence, holiness, love, justice, and not something conveyed to the soul by a miracle, and which exists there without any connexion with the soul, just as fluid may exist in a vessel without becoming a part of that vessel.—*Uni. Mis.*

Women of the Olden Time.

An eloquent writer in the *Ladies' Western Magazine*, hits off the false sentiment of Modern society in relation to the gentler sex, and, among many other good things, says:

"The same qualities that blessed the rude mountain homes of the olden time, when women made their simple toilet by the murmuring waters, must make them blessed now.—The qualities that could make a home anywhere, even in the hovel that stars shine through at night—the heart that infused a soul into the 'for better and for worse' of the ceremonial—the rare jewels of virtue and contentment that adorn her every day like a bride—the willing sacrifice of a thousand present pleasures to the common good—the bright intelligence that can interest, if it cannot guide, the gentleness that can soothe, if it cannot share, the sympathy that supports while it seems itself to cling. She who possesses these, must possess loveliness and grace that will survive the burnished tress, the rounded form, and the cloudless eyes of youth. Let the accomplishments of the boarding school and parlour have a place but not the place. The fashionable 'crush' of the assembly, the blaze of the soiree, the splendor of the levee, have much to do with the coloring of life, little with its warp or woof. That may fade, this will wear on.—In a fabric so rich and rare as life's—in selecting an array that we must live in, love in, purchase suffer in, and that will assuredly be drawn around us, when at last we 'lie down to pleasant dreams,' how apposite the question, *are the colors fast?* Thus was it that the minds and hearts of the wives and mothers of other days were moulded—hearts that dilated to the fullest pulsation of our better nature—minds that left their noble impress upon those who should do and suffer in the field fight of life. Old fashioned mothers have nearly all passed away with the blue check and homespun woolen of a simpler but purer time.—Here and there one remains truly 'accomplished' in heart and life for the sphere of home.—Old fashioned mothers! God bless them! who followed us with heart and prayer all over the world; lived in our lives and sorrowed in our grief; who knew more about preaching than poetry; spoke no dialect but that of love; never preached or wandered; made melody with their hearts, alone; and sent forth no books but living volumes that honored their authors and blessed the world."

An Honorable Man.

Although a man cannot be an honorable man without being an honest man, yet a man may be strictly honest without being honorable. Honesty refers to pecuniary affairs: honor refers to the principles and feelings.—may pay his debts punctually, he may defraud no man, and yet he may act dishonorably. He acts dishonorably when he gives his correspondent a worse opinion of his rivals in trade than he knows they deserve.—He acts dishonorably when he sells his commodities at less than their real value, in order to get away his neighbor's customers. He acts dishonorably when he purchases at higher than the market price, in order that he may raise the market upon another buyer. He acts dishonorably when he draws accommodation bills, and passes them to his banker for discount, as if they arose out of real transactions. He acts dishonorably in every case wherein his external conduct is at variance with his real opinions. He acts dishonorably, if when carrying on a prosperous trade he does not allow his servants and assistants through whose exertions he obtains his success, to share his prosperity. In all these cases there may be no intentional fraud. It may not be dishonest, but it may be dishonorable conduct.

Good Doctrine from a Presbyterian.

The editor of the orthodox paper in Chicago, "*HERALD OF THE PRATERS*," offers to his readers the following good sentiments:

"Men wish to be happy. To secure happiness schemes endless in number are devised and prosecuted. The good and the bad all strive for it. To reach it in futurity, make themselves for the present unhappy—submitting to toil and suffering which could scarcely be borne but for the future bliss which is kept in sight.

Christians often speak of the land of felicity and pray for admission there at the last.—They talk of a world where all is peace and blessedness. When they speak of heaven, these are in many minds the first associations. In dwelling upon these, they often forget that which is first in order and first in importance, that upon which peace and blessedness depend, and without which there could not, and

ought not to be any such thing as peace or happiness in the universe. Can the sinful be permanently happy? Ought he to be so?—No: not in this universe, is there a corner where the sinful can hope to be happy?—That heaven of which he wishes to be an inhabitant and hopes that somehow and at some time he may be, could afford him no happiness were he to get there. It is not the fitting up, the equipage of the place; it is not the society of the place; it is nothing exterior to the individual himself that can afford him permanent content.

No; he must be holy, if he would be happy. If such be his character he cannot fail to be happy. Pain can make no enduring impression on the soul steered in righteousness. Whosoever he may be he will be happy for he is in sympathetic connection with the Eternal Fountain of holiness and happiness. Pray then and strive to be holy, and you must be happy!"

The Sinner surrounded by Fire.

The *Christian Mirror*, an orthodox paper of Portland, Me., writing on the subject of the New Birth, approves the following:

"An Indian having experienced a change of heart, was asked by a white man to describe how it was done. He replied he could not tell, but if the inquirer would go with him to the spot where the work was effected, he would show him. They went. The Indian, after going some distance into the wood, gathered a quantity of leaves, and made a circle of them. He then put a worm in the middle of it, and set it on fire. The worm, feeling the heat, ran to one side, then to the other,—it was on fire! After thus going from side to side in unavailing efforts to escape, he returned to the centre of the circle, and stretched himself out, apparently in despair, to die. At that moment the Indian caught the reptile in his hand. There, that was the way God did to me. I found myself a sinner—I felt myself in danger—I saw the angry eyes of God flashing on me. I tried to escape on one side, but I met fire! At last, in hopelessness, I gave up to die. Then Jesus Christ took my soul right up."

What a representation! God places a circle of fire around millions of our race, and finally takes from it one of every fifty—and leaves the balance to fry and roast! No way to get rid of the fire except by the hand of God; and to say nothing of Christendom, he never reaches it out to the heathen world, the larger majority of whom live and die without knowing of Christ or his Bible. Where is the justice of this scheme? Would it not disgrace a Nero? How much love must a man have for the Supreme Being, who is driven from one side of the fire to the other like the worm? The heat thereof will hardly awaken emotions of gratitude in his bosom, although it may cause him to run hard and suffer much.—Paul says, "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance"—not fire.—*Star.*

Divine Goodness.

God is good to all. It is the disposition of Divine goodness to save. How, then, can he doom any to an endless hell? In so doing he would act against goodness, and on the principle of hatred; and he therefore can only be good to as many as he saves. Which shall we believe, David, who says God is good to all,—or those who say he will doom millions to hell, and thus make him good to a few?

"The highest happiness to be enjoyed in this life is what all virtuous persons may enjoy,—the pleasures of a pure heart, of an upright, self-approving conscience, and the pleasures of innocent natural affection. Natural affections are the benevolent and delightful feelings which near relatives and kind friends cherish for each other,—the feelings which good parents experience for their children, and those with which children regard their parents, and their benefactor.—*Eliza Robbins.*

Happy will those be in the sterner or sedater portions of their life, who have looked on nature early, with an eye of admiration and love, and who have cherished the feelings which she excites on the young impressibilities; she will then be interesting to them ever after; and even in her roughest moods and features, as many have experienced.

Let sound reason weigh more with us than popular opinion. Possessed of prudence, no protecting divinity is wanting. Economy is in itself a good income.