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# RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "HACKNEY AND KINGSLAND GAZETTE."

SIR,—As you have for some time past been favouring your readers with the views of several of the ministers of the neighbourhood on *Theology*, perhaps you will kindly find space for the following views of a layman on what he presumes to call "Religion," and oblige,

Yours respectfully,

*Shendebolt*

*W. E. Corney  
formerly of St.  
Pl. Chapel*

I believe in Rational Christianity, pure and simple, or Christian morality, as was taught by Christ; in contra-distinction to the adulterated *clerical* christianity now so prevalent, and which has almost elbowed the Christianity of Christ out of the world; whereby superstition and foolish rites and ceremonies are substituted in the room of pure morality, true virtue, and genuine religion. I believe the Christianity of Christ to be "Peace on earth, goodwill to man," the love of God and our neighbour, universal charity and benevolence, and the golden rule of "doing to others as we would have them to do unto us," and not in the incomprehensible creeds and unintelligible dogmas of popular theology. I believe in a God of perfect justice, who rewards the good in exact proportion to their merits, and proportionately punishes the wicked; such punishments being corrective and purifying: "whatsoever a man sows so shall he reap." That the favour of God and happiness are to be procured by repentance and amendment; by personal not by vicarious agency. That well-matured *reason* and *conscience* are the best guides to be depended on, and if we neglect or renounce their directions and admonitions, we lay ourselves open to all manner of delusion and priestcraft, hateful to God and destructive to mankind. That instead of stereotyped creeds, blind zeal, and religious persecution for "righteousness' sake," we should promote love, peace, temperance, gratitude, charity and universal benevolence: so as to reduce religion to that plain, simple system of aiming to attain that abstract perfection as taught by Christ, which is "Be ye perfect." The principles to promote these are few and easy: 1st, That there is a God, an Almighty Creator, to whom all existence belongs and is subject, and who ought to be worshipped by all mankind. 2nd, That by his immutable laws, the good are rewarded and the wicked punished here and hereafter. 3rd, That repentance and reformation are required to obtain the one and escape the other. 4th, That true religion

is that which was stated by Christ, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." To love God is to love all "Good," as truth, justice, charity, and every good work; to love *truth* is to love the "God of Truth," &c.

I do not believe in the orthodox view of the *atonement*, that Christ came to *reconcile* God to us, but rather that he came to reconcile us to God. I do not believe in the necessity of his *having to be crucified*, and to take upon himself the sins of all, before man could be saved; if such were the case how infinitely grateful we ought to be to those *orthodox* Jews who cruelly put him to death, in order that we might be saved! Neither do I believe in the orthodoxy of the *present* day, which says "there are three Gods all equal," and yet so *unequal* that one God is ever interceding, and endeavouring to appease the wrath of another God! if so, *one* must be in the wrong! I believe in the absolute *perfection* of a Divine Creator, and who does not thus require to be *changed* in order that *endless* punishment may be averted, for *temporary* sins. I believe that God is love, and that his "mercy" and not his chastisement "endureth for ever."

I do not believe in "original sin" and that man was pre-ordained to be its victim; nor in the destruction of unbaptized infants, as the Roman and Anglican priests tell us. I prefer Christ's doctrine; he says "of such is the kingdom of Heaven." I do not believe in that best friend of priest-craft,—a personal devil, and who is said to be more mighty than the *All-mighty* in obtaining the greatest number of immortal souls, thus having power to thwart God's providence,—nor in a material hell-fire, which is ever consuming those souls. I do not believe "in three Gods, yet one God" which the Church of England says we must believe or "without doubt perish everlastingly." Its creeds are to me downright blasphemy.

I do not believe that the Bible was divinely inspired" from beginning to end and was all written by the "finger of God." I believe the Bible was made for man, not man for the Bible, that it is an historical, moral and spiritual teacher, not altogether correct, but containing many truths and many errors; a compilation of different works by different authors, written at different periods, and by the most learned and wise men of their day, but that neither they nor their works are infallible, as the science of geology and astronomy, and even their own contradictions prove. That men in after ages collected and bound together such of these books as they thought proper and called them the Bible, and that these selfsame human beings, at the Council of Nice, &c., rejected such other books as they thought of less worthy note; that these men were also as learned and wise as the times would permit, but not infallible and possibly not altogether without prejudice or partiality.

I believe real christianity to be absolute religion, which *thinks* and *works*; goodness towards man, and piety towards God; undogmatic, unsectarian, liberal, broad and free, preached with faith and applied to life, *being good and doing good*. There is but one real religion which we need only *open our eyes* to see, and which requires neither creeds nor catechisms to discern; only *live* it, in love to God and man, and we are *blessed* by Him who liveth for ever, in spite of all that priests and their dupes may say to the contrary, for thank God they are not to be our judges, otherwise few would escape.

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