

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS PREJUDICES.

It is impossible for one who truly loves, embraces, honors and defends any religion to remain indifferent when he sees her covered with reproach and contempt. He sees with deep regret the operation of those causes that excite and inflame the enmity of the carnal mind. He sighs and sheds many a tear in secret, when he finds religion wounded in the house of her friends.

The latent aversion of the depraved heart to everything spiritually good will easily account for much of the opposition which worldly men manifest to vital godliness; but it deserves inquiry whether their antipathies are not augmented by the respective religionists themselves. The poison everywhere exists, and often lies in a dormant state; but the virulence of its action, the rage with which it spreads and operates, may in general, be traced to certain excitements.

We have reason to believe that many a religious *Purohit* increases the prejudice of worldly men by a coldness and gloomy reserve in his manners. Though religion is the only source of "solid comfort and lasting joy," we must confess that a few individuals avowedly and perhaps sincerely attached to it give little proof of its happy influence upon themselves. Their fears predominate, their comforts are outweighed by their troubles, they are oftener walking in the chilling shade than in the cheering sunshine, and their sighs are more commonly heard than their songs. Persons of this character may be earnest and conscientious, may at times feel an earnestness and deep interest in closest devotion, but their social intercourse is flat and insipid. Their language is uncouth, harsh, repulsive, full of censures and complaints; their life is a dull routine of tame and tiresome formalities. It is therefore not surprising that persons of this description should raise an unfavorable idea of religion in the minds of worldly men. The system is charged with the faults of those who espouse it. Let those who sincerely wish to promote the cause of God in an evil world beware of furnishing its enemies with a plausible plea, by exhibiting in their conduct and conversation any gloom, moroseness, or austerity, which has a direct tendency to alienate and disgust. Let them be firm and steadfast, but uniformly kind and courteous; spreading the charm of a winning affability and benevolence over all the social circle in which it is their lot to move. By ease, freedom, cheerfulness and suavity, under the control of a vigilant discretion, they will be able to cast the scales of ignorance and prejudice off their eyes, and one thing is sure, the end will be the unity of all religions, a blending which may seem impossible but which may prove successful.

Many who profess any particular religion increase the prejudice of others by the inconsistencies they betray in their commercial dealings. One is hard and rigid in the bargains he makes, in the conditions he prescribes, yet lax and remiss in the fulfillment of the engagements into which he has entered. Another is mean and mercenary in trifles, though

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upright and honorable in matters of prime importance. This is the reason why there is a spirit of speculation and eager competition which breaks down all prudence and moderation. The scoffer cries “Ah!” These are your religious people!”

It must not be disguised that the majority of our brethren assume a religious profession for selfish and sinister purposes and the culpable manner in which they carry on trade greatly dishonors and injures the religion they profess. It is not enough that their motives are right but they must shun the very appearance of evil. The end does not, according to an old maxim, justify the means. A good object, pursued in a bad temper, or in a violent and indiscreet manner, cannot really advance the interests of religion. It should therefore be the constant study, the ardent and unwearied endeavor of pious men, to hold forth the words of truth and reason in their conduct and to exhibit to the eyes of all the true fruits of righteousness.

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