

**WHAT IS RELIGION?  
THE QUESTION  
ANSWERED**

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What is religion? The question answered by Henry Colman

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**HENRY COLMAN**

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# WHAT IS RELIGION?

THE QUESTION ANSWERED.

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BY

HENRY COLMAN.

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"People will not believe that it is possible to be religious  
without a religion."

ARON.

LONDON :

CHAPMAN, BROTHERS, NEWGATE STREET.

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1846.

767.

## NOTICE.

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THE subjoined contains the substance of a Discourse delivered on Sunday, Sept. 27th, 1846, at the New Gravel-Pit Chapel, Hackney, near London. This will explain its style, and any local allusions which may appear in it. Its whole object is to console the diffident and distrustful, and to aid, in a very humble way, the cause of Universal Forbearance and Charity. It was not designed for publication. It is published by request; and I am most happy to leave behind me any recognitions of that unceasing kindness and good-will, and that distinguished friendship, which I have enjoyed during my protracted residence in this country.

If the happiness of Heaven is, as many perhaps with some reason suppose, to consist in part in a more elevated and nearer intercourse with the wise and good, with minds stimulated by an ardent love of truth and glowing with an irrepressible passion for moral goodness, and in

the strengthening and continual enlargement and purification of kind and benevolent affections and sympathies,—I can only say, the delightful intimacy which I have had with many such minds during a long life, and have enjoyed so fully here, even in a land of comparative strangers, gives a value to my faith and hopes, which overwhelms and defies all utterance.

LONDON, October 1, 1846.

## WHAT IS RELIGION?

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I PROPOSE to consider on this occasion one of the most important questions which can be addressed to reflecting minds; and that is, What is Religion? I shall, in a plain, direct and familiar manner, give the best answer to it which I am able. Most persons will say at once, The answer is very easy; and yet a comprehensive, universal, practical, unexceptionable answer, and therefore a true answer, may not be so easy as we suppose. If we should go into the thousand churches or chapels in London, how many of



them should we find agreeing to give the same answer? You have lately had an example of the unity which prevails in this matter among persons calling themselves Christians, and coming together from distant parts of the world, that they might unite in a common bond of what is called Evangelical Alliance. They begin with excluding from the pale of Christianity the Unitarians—that was a small affair; and then the Roman Catholics—that was a large affair, for the members of this Church embrace perhaps a third of the Christian world; and who can have a doubt, that if there had been any effervescence on matters of theological doctrine among these heterogeneous elements, which seemed so calm and placid, it would have been as active as it has always been found among such fervid bodies, when brought together? Quiet as the upper surface appeared, if some one of

the clerical chemists had ventured to pour in even a few drops of those theological acids in which they often deal so largely, we should have seen a great many separations and the formation of new affinities, and not a few of those explosions which often result in such a process from the disruption of old and the formation of new combinations. Harmonious as all this meeting assumed to be, there was not a Baptist, holding to the principles of his sect, who would have admitted any other than a person baptized in his form to his fellowship; nor a Scotch Presbyterian, who would have received to his communion any one without a token of the soundness of his faith; nor an Episcopalian, who would have permitted any one of the Dissenting brethren, whom he so affectionately embraced, to occupy his pulpit or minister at his altar.

This is an example of the harmony which

prevails in the community on the subject of Religion. It would not be surprising, if, in the assembly which I am now addressing, each of us were called upon to answer by himself and for himself this great question, What is Religion? there should be found a diversity, if not a strong contrariety, of opinion and sentiment.

Does this arise from the nature of the subject? Is the question not susceptible of a simple and direct answer? Is religion in itself a matter so indefinite, so changeable, or a matter so incomprehensible, that we cannot determine what it is? I think not; and in spite of all the diversities of sentiment which exist, and the various forms under which this subject presents itself, I hope it will not be deemed presumptuous, if, with all due respect for the judgment of others, I venture to give my own opinion.