

**CHRIST  
OUR EXAMPLE**

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Christ Our Example by Caroline Fry

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# CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

*"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—*  
2 Cor. iii. 18.

Among those who call themselves Christians, there is a large class with whom some vague estimate of character makes up the whole idea of religion. A good Christian is understood to be one who pays his debts, loves his family, deals honourably with his neighbours, and carries himself amiably and respectably ac-

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According to his station in society; without any reference to what he believes of the doctrines of Christianity, or whether he believes in Christ at all. The unbelieving poet's axiom is their favourite creed—

“His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

But the creed is *false* than the axiom. This is in the abstract true; for there is no rule of right but the revealed will of God—no example of right but the example of Christ; and he whose life is conformed to these, cannot indeed be wrong. “This is the will of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.” To believe in Christ and follow in his footsteps, we must be born anew and sanctified by the Holy Spirit—and this is to be a Christian indeed. But this is not the poet's meaning, nor the meaning of his unconscious copyists, whether they be avowed Socinians, or of the many who are Socinian in heart without being aware of it. These all, unless they think it bad taste to name the name of Christ, or unless the enmity of the heart to the doctrines of the gospel is so great that they would exclude Christ from their religion altogether, profess to think the

example of Jesus the only thing worthy of attention; the morality of the Bible the only thing of importance in it. To conform to these, they fancy themselves fully competent, by virtue of some power given by God at their birth; or some grace imparted in baptism; or some act of amnesty, they scarce know what, by which the will is to be taken for the deed, and they who have not done well are to be accepted as having done the best they could. If to persons of this class we speak of faith, they tell us that works are better. If we speak of sin, they say, God is merciful, and their hearts are good. If we set Christ before them, they say it is better to be like him than to talk so much about him. The disciples of Christ, living by faith upon his name, meet with ungentle treatment at their hands; the long repented sins of former days, the deeply mourned defectibility of present conduct, being esteemed sufficient evidence of hypocrisy. But if there be those on the other hand, who "deny the Lord that bought them," and live without God in the world, they are defended on the ground that, being upright and conscientious men, we have nothing to do with what they *think*. Nay,



I have observed that even the word of God meets with but partial acceptance at the hands of these moralists; they like none of it but the gospels, which they idly and falsely conceive to be the practical part of Scripture. "Character, character!"—this is their cry; they will have nothing but character. It seems to them that professors of religion cannot be right, their conduct being so defective. Men of the world cannot be wrong, being so amiable and upright.

Should any such persons cast an eye upon this page, I would bespeak from them a favourable attention. They will not find here a treatise upon faith. I shall not attempt to prove that such opinions virtually set at nought the sacrifice of Christ, make it useless, make it vain; deny the truth of the Scriptures, the corruption of man, the nature of sin, and the faithfulness of God in what he has revealed, and sink Christianity to a level with Deism or Mahometanism, which each has a code of morals of its own. The subject of this volume is the fruits of faith, the Christian character—the very test by which *they* have chosen to be tried. We cannot deny it is a Scripture test: "By

their fruits ye shall know them." I bespeak only that the fruit the branches bear shall resemble that which grew upon the stem; that there be no choosing of it by our tastes and habits, or the maxims and conventions of society; that there be no judgment of it but the judgment of God as declared in holy Scripture.

I am aware that amongst the number who thus suspend their religious opinions upon some indefinite notions of character, there are persons neither so light nor so careless, though perhaps not less mistaken than those I have described. These are they who read the Bible with seriousness, who seek truth with a willing and desiring mind, do reverence to their own abstract idea of religion, and think that if they could see it exemplified, they should love it and bow down before it. But because they have formed their *beau idéal* of a Christian from some fancy of their own, rather than from the word of God, they are baffled and puzzled by what they see. In the people of this world they frequently perceive a dignified uprightness, a polished amiability, very strikingly contrasted with the rugged humours and defective conduct of some of the children of God. Could the

heart of each be unclosed, and the springs and motives of action be brought to the test of Scripture, there would be little difficulty, I believe, in deciding which of them approaches nearest to our great Example. But the exterior only is perceived, and this is measured by the "measure of a man," and not of God; and the honest inquirer after Christian character, still persuading himself he shall love it when he finds it, either takes that for it which is not it, and does homage to a counterfeit; or, failing to recognise the reality, when he finds it, learns to doubt if it has existence anywhere. I shall be very glad if I can show to any such that they mistake the character they are in search of; that they have not examined the Divine Original with sufficient minuteness to know the traces of his image when they see them. Some part of the difficulty that opposes their acceptance of a profession so little borne out by the character of the professors, may perhaps be removed if I can convince them that, however beautiful appears the character of the upright and amiable of this world, it bears not the slightest resemblance to the character of Him, to be conformed to whose likeness we were