

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

DEATH

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The end of another year is fast approaching, and nothing but the sudden intervention of the great final day can prevent its speedy conclusion.

We are still alive, and are hoping to enter upon another year; but *how*? That is the great question. Some one, perhaps, is looking upon this page who has almost completed another year without Christ. Are you going to begin another without Him? You intended some time ago to give your heart to God; but something "came in the way." A something always does and always will until death itself comes in the way, and shuts you for ever out of heaven and hope. Oh! let the old things pass away with the old year. This miserable struggle against God, let it die with the old year. This miserable struggle against God, let it die with 1876, and let there be peace and joy and righteousness henceforth for evermore.

Christian, is there nothing about you that you would fain see pass away, as the old year is about to do? Has all within and without been harmony with God during the year, or have there been disputings, disturbances, soul-sicknesses, and ailments that have spoiled your heavenly feast, and blotted the memory of the months again and again? Come, let us have a look around.

I.—THERE ARE SOME THINGS ABOUT ALMOST ALL BELIEVERS WHICH OUGHT TO DIE.

When Israel went over Jordan into the land of promise, there were a number of people living in their new country whose death was a part of the work the people of God were bound to accomplish. They had made themselves so abominable in the sight of God by their iniquities that in His merciful purpose to mankind, and especially in His glorious aim at producing and preserving it holy people to learn the world, He could only decree for them destruction, sudden and entire.

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But Israel had no sooner tasted the sweets of the lovely land, and rested for a moment in its charming bowers, than the soft and cowardly spirit of indulgence stole away their hearts from thorough allegiance to their King—God, and they left the inhabitants of the land still alive, to spread amongst their own tribes the fearful contagion of sin, and speedily to reduce them, too, to the low level of ungodliness, over which the terrible blast of God's indignation continually sweeps.

Worse than that; when Joshua had gathered the people together, and circumcised their bodies, their hearts remained uncircumcised. Gold and silver, and apparel, and sinful pleasure, wine and strong drink, feasting, and human honor and power, were just as attractive to them as to the very Canaanites before the, and in the regular progress of their evil inclinations the senseless idols of the heathen gained their homage, until they were hurried down into a complete and general debasement more appalling and disgusting than that of the very nations whose overthrow had been determined upon that they might live to God.

And yet this was Israel: the people of the Lord God of Hosts; of the seed of Abraham; the children of promise. They had kept together around the tabernacle of God for forty years, amidst trial and sorrow, and death and wanderings. At the command of a man hitherto but insignificant, if not unknown to most of them, they had formed their battalions, and marched into the Jordan valley, relying upon the salvation of God, and determined to fight and conquer all Canaan for Him. They had marched in silence, like so many good little children, round Jericho for six days, on the seventh day they had charged, at the word of command, like trained soldiers. Their religion, so far, was thoroughgoing, Sunday and weekday. And when Achan sinned, and they were driven back from Ai, they humbled themselves before God, put away the evil, and then went up to the battle again. After the victory, every man, woman, and child of them stood up around the altar of God, and listened to His word, and consecrated themselves afresh to Him. Oh! yes; they were the Lord's people, and the Lord was with them, and fought for them too. Well might the sun linger beyond his time to stare at the wondrous sight—a great body of men really in union with God for once, truly devoted to Him, and fully enjoying His favor. There had been nothing like it in the world before. It is a very grave question whether there has even been anything better, grander, more beautiful

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whether there has even been anything better, grander, more beautiful, since God Himself was delighted. Hell for once stood aghast.

But all the time these people carried about in their own hearts the seeds of rebellion and national desolation. They soon forgot Him, and went after other gods. What a bad lot they were! And yet, were they a fraction worse than the great body of the Lord's people today? Let us see.

Here is a man who has been truly converted to God. He loves God, and is fully resolved to serve Him; but just watch him through one day. He rises, and with only a little bit of prayer and reading of God's word, if any, he hurries off to business. From the moment he leaves the door his mind is as full of earthly cares as that of the man who lives upstairs without God. By-and-by "things go contrary." He is worried, cast down, bothered, and anxious, just like his ungodly neighbor. Another stinging blow, and he loses his temper. The moment he has felt or shown this he feels condemned, and is more downcast than ever. Then he gets into conversation with some nice people. They are unconverted, but he talks and laughs and jokes with the rest. He feels worse after this. His mind is taken right off from God; and as the time draws nigh for him to go home, he feels as little like going to service that night as he well could. On his way home he meets somebody's wife dressed up like a lady, and determines to get just such a bonnet and shawl for his wife. He sees a bill describing an entertainment at St. Judas's schoolroom; singing, recitations, and such like. It is on his class night, but he feels strongly inclined to go. There cannot be any great harm in it, for is it not for a good cause, and is not the Rev. Mr. Pleasall going to be in the chair? True, it will keep him away from a spiritual meeting, but then he cannot *always* be expected to be there.

At tea his wife, who has been converted more recently than him, and is longing to know more of God, finds it difficult to keep him to godly conversation. He keeps turning off to worldly things. Nevertheless, under her influence, he gets off to the open-air service half-an-hour late. If you speak to him, he will tell you he works so late, and has so far to walk home, that he cannot get in time. The fact is, he cannot be there in time unless it is his great object when he leaves his earthly work to get to work for God. Asked to speak, he declines, and then, in his mind, severely criticizes the character, appearance, manner or matter, of somebody else. Indoors he is only half awake through the first part of the service.

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Perhaps he hurries off when the prayer-meeting is barely commenced, having "to get up early in the morning"; that is, having already got down very low in spiritual life. Perhaps, however, he has in the tie reflected, repented, and cast himself afresh upon God. Somebody is seeking mercy, and the sight quite wakens him up. He prays for them with all his heart, and goes away so happy that you expect to see him doing wonderfully the next evening. But somebody less godly walks home with him, speaking evil of somebody else. He listens, he feels unkindly, and lies down, after a little bit of an unfeeling prayer, pretty much as he got up.

By-and-by, if he gets no better, he will very likely get much worse. He will leave speaking entirely to those who are "better qualified" than he is. Then he will begin to work overtime and get money, and stay away from week-night services. Then he will get so tired by Saturday night that you will never see him till half-past eleven on Sunday morning, when he will walk in with his wife and children dressed up with all that overtime money can buy. In the afternoon he will need to rest. In the evening he may perchance be seen in the procession, just to satisfy himself and others that he is really in earnest yet, though you have only to watch his mouth even then to see that his heart is not in the singing as it once was. How much lower he will sink, God only knows. He is going down.

Is not this a fair portrait? Does it not represent a man *superior* to millions of professing Christians? Are not some of its lines properly descriptive of nearly every one you know? Are not the seeds of death still sprouting in the hearts of many of the Lord's people, bringing forth evil which they hate, but cannot avoid, until a more thorough work has been wrought within?

No evil thought, or word, or action can flow from the love of God. It must come from a different source entirely. And if, therefore, any one's life is a mixture of good and evil, there must be within the a corrupt fountain as well as a pure one. This corrupt fountain we must get rid of. It must die. It must be cast out to hell, whence it came, before the believer can be pure in heart, and can live always in accordance with the Divine will.

II.—GOD IS ABLE TO KILL WHAT HE HATES.



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He is able at any moment to cast both body and soul into hell. He is able in a moment to smite, to overthrow, to cast out, to destroy any enemy, or any number of enemies. Then He is able in a moment to make an utter end of "the carnal mind" in His people; to cause the instant cessation of the storm within their breasts between the desires of the flesh and of the mind that war against His Spirit; to sweep away every inclination to evil like chaff before the wind.

Look at Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They would not submit to the authority God has established over them. They really meant having a portion of Canaan if there were any to be had; but they wished to have their own way to a larger extent. "Now," says Moses, "if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, then shall you understand that these men have provoked the Lord." The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the three families, tents, goods, and all, sank in a moment with one terrible shriek of agony from the sight of all Israel into darkness and death.

Now, if there be in any of us any unbelief, or pride, or envy, or uncharitable feeling, or ill-temper, or impatience, or covetousness, or indolence, anything which provokes the Lord, is He not able "to make a new thing" just this moment, and sink it all out of sight? to be sure He is!

Is the Lord less sensitive about His family than earthly parents are? Have you never seen a mother provoked with a dirty pinafore or a loose necktie? Have you never seen a father provoked at a misspelt word or a vulgar expression? Have you not seen such little things put right *instantly*? And is not the Lord our Father so provoked with the slightest dishonor to His family that He would instantly put the wrong entirely right if we would but let Him? Oh, yes; the Lord is fond of making new things, and making all things new within His people; and He will do it at any moment for any one who is willing for the old man suddenly to die and the new kingdom to be perfectly established.

Look, again, at the great army of the great Sennacherib. Was there ever a more splendid body of troops? Was there ever a more skillful or confident general? Had they not marched right up into the land? Had they not the king and people at their mercy? Were they not many enough and strong enough to make an utter end of the country and of everything living in it? But the Lord of Hosts was there, and in one night He breathed death over the camp of the guards, the

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mighty men of valor, and turned it into a cemetery. No wounded men—no invalids—no prisoners—no fugitives—“*they were all dead corpses.*” It was not done with shells, or breechloaders, or grapeshot, or Gatlings, or mines; the Angel of the Lord came down upon them like dew, and they were no more. That is the way the Lord disposes of His foes when He likes.

Now if a Christian finds all his life invaded by evil influences, every day and every hour, his very religious services mixed up with sin, and the great devil sneering at him, and telling him he is just like the rest, “prone to wander,” and cannot help himself, has he not a right, nay, ought he not to call in this Mighty Deliverer, and have all that made an instant end of?

Is it any exaggeration to say that many a true lover of God feels himself besieged closely with evil inclinations? Every time he walks the streets the sentinels of the devil in his soul, his own old sinful desires, call his attention to the money, and fashions, and affairs of the world, and although he does not surrender, he feels very uncomfortable. It is a struggle. Every time he enters his house the devil's pickets, in the shape of his own old love of self and ease, prompt him to waste time, and keep away from the work of God. He breaks through, perhaps, but it is a struggle. Every time he enters the house of God the devil's cavalry, in the shape of his own old envious feelings, or covetousness, or love of praise, or self-esteem, or fear of man, make a rush in his soul and spoil, in some measure, his enjoyment and devotion. He fires his guns, and stills the tumult for the time; but the cavalry are only behind that little thicket, ready for another rush next time. It is bad enough to be besieged by the devil. The temptations which come whizzing from his guns strike every point of the citadel. It is enough to have to resist all these, without having inner feelings of our own to be always troubling us. Can we not get rid of all these lusts which war against the soul? Is not God able today, as yesterday, to slay with the breath of His mouth? Of course He is!

Now, then, before another year begins, why not ask God to make an instant, utter end of anything and everything in us that is at enmity against Him? Nay, why not believe that He does just at this moment breath death upon all that is offensive to Him, and rise up new—all new—all heavenly in His sight?

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What a pity that, when in our baby-days they prayed over us, "Let all carnal affections die in him," we were unable to join in the prayer, and believe that the God of Fire did it just then! But are we never to rise to the accomplishment of that prayer? Ah! surely we will just now lay the only sure foundation of a year of solid peace, and perfect joy and love, by insisting upon the instant and utter destruction of every foe within.

"Behold, now is the accepted time!
Behold, now is the day of salvation!"

