

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT BEGINNING AGAIN

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It has pleased God so to arrange all created things that we must always be making fresh starts. Therefore, we need never be ashamed of beginning again. No one is ashamed to get up in the morning, because no one can do away either with night or exhaustion. And while so intimate a connection exists between our bodies and our souls, we shall find it absolutely necessary for spiritual efficiency to constantly begin again. In climbing a great mountain, you see ever and anon in front of you what seems to be the summit. "Now," one says, "I am almost there; only a few more minutes, and I shall have done." But the height once reached, one sees a greater height still in front, and the climbing operation has to be recommenced. This, too, from no fault of the climber, or of his climbing, but simply from the nature of things. Just so the most devoted man of God must continually be "girding up his loins," and "taking up his cross," and "separating himself to the work," if he is fully to accomplish the mission of his life.

But no one should ever begin again to do wrong. Oh, that earnest self-examination, prayer, and thought, may at this season result in the decision of many, both of the Lord's people and of the ungodly, to break off their sins by righteousness!

I. WE SHOULD ONLY BEGIN AGAIN TO DO RIGHT.

And, thank God! We can know certainly what *is* wright. God has so often begun again to show to us the light of His truth, that if we are only willing, we cannot fail speedily to learn how to be obedient. He is not weary yet. He will begin again today to enlighten the mind and heart of any one who desires it, if we will look to Him just this moment.

Oh! Do let us be *sure* about everything we think and feel and do. God is sure; His testimonies are very sure; His Spirit is a sure and never failing guide. We can



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never have any excuse if we ever again repeat a thought, a feeling, an action, which is contrary to our Father's will.

Men of the world are too wise to recommence anything which is not right in their eyes in business—that is to say, anything which does not serve their purpose. The post-office begins its multiplied services again on the 1st of January; but mail-contracts which are not satisfactory to the authorities will not be renewed. The man whose grand investment in New Year's goods last year was unprofitable will not begin the same scheme again. But millions of Christians who admit that their life last year was far from that living, holy, powerful thing it should have been, have begun again just as they did on the 1st of January, 1874. And why, if not because they prefer self and the world to the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

But, alas! many not only do this, but attempt to justify such conduct by saying in the most sanctimonious fashion, "The Lord knows what poor erring creatures we are; I never felt so deeply conscious of my own weakness as I do at the present moment; I can only go back to the point from which I started at the first, and plead the merits of Christ as my only hope." How plausible it all sounds! Who could imagine that such beautiful expressions were invented simply to excuse continuance in more or less of isn?

It is not right to begin again at the beginning. Such an act in itself convicts the new beginner of gross negligence. During the frosty weather the workmen of many trades are necessarily laid off for a time (with what distressing results we East-enders know too well); but what would any one say to the builder who, having left a house half finished, talked of again laying the foundation so soon so the frost was over? Was such a case ever heard of, we wonder? Nay, surely; for men of business build and work, not merely in word, but in deed; so that if forced for a time to relinquish their task, they can begin again, not at the beginning, but where they left off.

Instead of honoring the blood of Christ, to go back to it to be cleansed from our "old sins" is to prove that the sow has been returning to wallow in the mire—is to show that we have not followed Jesus in the way, but have loitered near the gate. Let us be done with this mock humility; let us attain to something ever

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higher and higher, and let us advance from glory unto glory, never turning back to the beggarly elements of the world, but ever following on to know the Lord.

It is Divine to begin again to do right.

God began again six times to make the world. He began again after the flood to cause it to bring forth, and to cause His creatures to be fruitful, and to multiply, and replenish the earth. He remembered His people Israel, and began again to bless them after the afflictions of Egypt. He remembered His covenant, and began again to lead them on to victory after the rebellions of the desert. He began again to subdue their enemies before them after the stoning of Achan. He began again to deliver them by saviors from time to time when they had turned aside to idols. He began again to manifest among them His glory when the temple was built. He began again to dwell amongst them after the Babylonish captivity. He began again to instruct them many times by His prophets. He began again to covenant with them in Jesus. He began again to pour out the Spirit upon them at Pentecost. Has He not many a time since begun again to refresh His inheritance when it was weary? Has He not begun again to draw nigh to many of us when we have begun again to draw nigh to Him? Oh, then, let it be the chiefest joy of New Year to us to begin again whatever has been good, excellent, and worthy of God in our living so far. Let us begin again to pray, to watch, to labor, till the Master shall say, "It is enough; come up hither." Till then nothing is absolutely perfect.

II. BEGINNING AGAIN IMPLIES IMPERFECTION.

Imperfection not necessarily in the beginner, but necessarily in his work. While we are told that God's "work is perfect" we are also told that His first covenant with Israel would not have been set aside had it not been imperfect—a simple instance of the fact that work perfect in itself may be imperfect in its effect, and that consequently the worker may have to begin again.

The manufacturers have been extremely busy completing goods for Christmas. The whole of the required quantities produced, their work was perfect; but that work will not suffice for the New Year's consumption. They will have to begin again as soon as the holidays (and the drinking) will allow them. The man who, by many years of toil, has realized an independency has perfected his business



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career; but he has still much to do to make himself comfortable in his new circumstances, and perhaps his soul has had no attention at all yet.

Is not this the very distinction which is lost sight of by those who furiously assault the doctrine of Christian perfection? A man who says, "My will is entirely resigned to God; I am perfectly set from from sin; my heart is washed white in the blood of Christ," does not assert an impassable perfection, but only the perfect apprehension of that for which he is perfectly apprehended of Christ. It is not saying, "I have reached the top," but, "I have reached the high level." We are commanded to walk with God, and to sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. This must be walking and sitting very high above sin; but we walk to progress, and we sit down to learn. May God help us, leaving the things that are behind, to press on to those that are before.

Let us not be distressed at imperfection in our work. Even if we could have helped, we cannot help it now. Let us spend all our time and energy, not in grumbling at the results of the past, but in pushing on to better things in the future. We have not reached every one with the Gospel yet; we have not got all the sinners converted; we have not set every convert to work to the greatest possible extent; we have not done yet, in fact. But never mind! We have begun again, and we shall, by the grace of God, do more in 1875 than in any previous year.

III. TO BEGIN AGAIN IMPLIES NO DESPAIR.

And we ought not to despair of the accomplishment of any task which God has assigned to us. He never lays upon any of His people a burden too heavy to be borne, nor requires of them a day's work beyond the day's grace. With Christ we have all things, and can do all things. Therefore, let us cheerfully take up again the work that seemed so little successful yesterday. If it be the right thing to do, let us go on doing it, beginning again and again until complete success be achieved, as achieved it will be some day.

Within the memory of most of us a strong telegraph cable, thousands of miles long, was very carefully constructed, and, after careful testing, was laid down by skillful hands in the confident expectation of establishing direct telegraphic communication between Europe and America. But, alas! the Atlantic cable was



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broken, and some very wise people shook their heads, and declared they “never believed in it,” and so forth. But the hopes of the originators of the great enterprise were not broken when their cable fell from the stern of the *Great Eastern*. The lost end was picked up, the cable spliced, laid down, and used. Since then the construction of great ocean telegraph cables has become so common as to attract but little notice, and we read in the morning in London the afternoon events of same day in China.

In trying to transmit to the hearts of men afar off from God by sin and wicked works the glorious truths of the Gospel, we must expect many disappointments, many a cable flaw, many a lost end, many disturbing influence, rendering communication impossible. But we must not, we may not, despair. Let us begin again where we left off.

The only certain mark of victory is to begin again. Those who begin again are not vanquished; those who give up are. Whenever the result of a battle is disputed, people ask, “What happened the next day?” Those who fell back then must be considered to have been defeated; those who remained in their former positions or advanced must have been victorious. Satan and the world combined can never overcome a man who will not give up doing right. He may suffer, and suffer severely; but by beginning every day, he must conquer some day. The people who leave off—who leave off believing, who leave off praying, who leave off fighting, who leave off working—are and must be beaten.

All our springs are in Him. To begin again rightly is to receive a fresh baptism of His Spirit. His power alone can send us forth fitted to war a good warfare in His cause. After all the cure blows struck at us in 1874, only the joy that comes from His bright presence can send us forth with the light-hearted confidence of victors to the struggles of 1875.

God again! Chosen, accepted, submitted to, honored, praised, witnessed for, followed, and, above all, trusted. In God we shall do valiantly. In God we shall subdue every foe. On, on again in God, till our country be turned upside down by His Word!