

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

CHRIST—LIFE

The Christian Mission Magazine, March 1877

Why was God manifest in the flesh once? Why those thirty years of degradation and suffering when three, at any rate, in a body "prepared" in maturity and let down would have been sufficient? Was the life of Christ merely an example of good conduct which should always defy imitation? If so, why have we not a full account of all of it? Why is that portion of it which comes most within the lines of ordinary human life screened from view? No, no, the life of Christ was to be a pattern by which the "faithful Creator" was faithfully to work ever after. The great mystery, God manifest in the flesh, was not to be a "nine-days' wonder" to a little Eastern community. It was to be the order of the day thenceforth and for ever. The temple on Mount Moriah was to be swept away, and here was the pattern of the temple that was to spring up by the power of Him that raised Christ from the dead, all over the world.

After the life of Christ, however could any inferior life satisfy God? The law was a grand and perfect program. It only wanted somebody to fulfill it, and this nobody ever did till Christ came. Before Him, God might well be content with an earnest, ceaseless struggle to do His will. He might well delight in people who set themselves to carry out His intentions. But when the law had lived in veritable flesh and blood, what could God say but that this law was no longer of any use? "Be ye holy, for I am holy," He said, with a human tongue amongst a company of men in an earthly city, and the law was lost to view in the glorious presence of the law-giver carrying out all His purpose in a human frame. And thenceforth for ever no life can ever be satisfactory to God, no matter what men may say or think, which is not similar to the life of His Son.

The theory that no one can in the flesh be entirely conformed to the will of God, if it were not so dreadfully subversive of His rights and authority, would be intensely amusing. A legislature spends a great deal of time, and uses all the genius, talent, ingenuity, and industry it can command, to elaborate a law which is to have a most salutary influence upon the country. At last every clause



50 Articles of War

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has received its finishing touch, the royal assent is duly given, and the law goes forth. The judges, the bar, the magistrates, the local authorities, the police study it carefully; the press publish lengthy summaries of its provisions; great public meetings are held everywhere, in which it is explained and discussed, and in which every one is urged to obey it; but, but—the conclusion to which every one comes is, “It is splendid act, a perfect act; but, of course it was never intended to be fully carried out in *this country*”!!! Where then? Does human history record an instance of such folly?

Here is a huge gun. The resources of the first arsenal in this country have been taxed to the very uttermost in its production. Every ounce of metal in its composition, every inch of it, every fitting has been prepared with the utmost care and skill. Drawings and photographs of the weapon, and of everything connected with it, have been made with the minutest attention. No expense or time has been grudged either in the production of the “Infant” or of the ammunition it is to consume. Every one whose opinion upon any question of construction was worth seeking has been amply consulted. At last the monster is ready. It is taken to the butts, subjected to every test that can be devised and experimented upon in every way that is likely to yield any useful result. The most exact notes are made of every discharge from it. At length all the trials and experiments are concluded. There is no flaw or defect in the gun within or without. It has done well in every respect. And now it is returned to the arsenal with the order that it is to be the model for a large number of all sizes. Big or little, they are all to be made of the very same metal, and of the very same pattern.

“Oh, but,” cries the superintendent; “Oh, but,” say the heads of departments; “Oh, but,” declare the draughtsmen; “oh, but,” chime in all the workmen, from the senior foreman to the youngest lad, “there can never be another gun made just like that one *here*.” “It is a magnificent gun, an unrivaled gun, an unsurpassable gun, a perfect gun; there never was such a gun before, and there can never be, another like it.” All the toil and trouble and expense of making a model thrown away!

No, no, no. “God is not a man that He should like, nor the Son of man that He should repent.” He made up His mind long ago that He would “dwell and walk” in any human being who would allow Him to do so. He promised it in the plainest words that He could use. He showed how it could be done in His Son Jesus, and



50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

then He offered *that* life, and nothing less, to all who would accept it. Any life less perfectly conformed to His will is a grief to Him, and a disgrace to the great Pattern which it professes to be founded upon. Either we must every moment "be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless," or every moment when this is not the case must be to His Holy Spirit a moment of grief, of mortification, of disappointment.

"But how dare any one make such a profession? They would be found covered with spots, and worthy of blame by every one immediately."

If that were not the case, for them to live would not be Christ. Men who profess to be His ministers have the impudence to stand up in what they call Christian pulpits, even now, and say that the life and words of Jesus are not without their defects. If the story of those thirty years' carpentering were obtainable, we wonder how many people would believe in the Incarnate Deity. What would parents nowadays do if a child of twelve were to take any such course as Jesus took at that age? Would they not seek medical advice about the poor child's brain? Nothing is more remarkable about the whole treatment of Christ, both living and dead, by men than the fact of His being "despised." He was "harmless"; He "did good"; there was nothing particularly bad about Him; but He was undoubtedly crazy. His "friends" jeeringly suggested that He should show Himself to His disciples, and let them see what He could do. The men who stared and laughed at His last agonies chaffed Him about saving others, and being unable to save Himself. No quantity or sort of miracle could save Him from perpetual reproaches and ridicule. "They laughed Him to scorn." The simpleton, really to believe God, and obey Him in everything! To pretend to do so! "Whom makest Thou Thyself?"

Just such a life must be the portion of any one who really wants to be like Jesus. Just as we accept the wisdom of God we become fools to human eyes, and just in proportion as we are like Him shall we be both despised and hated.

But how *can* the life of Christ begin again in any one? Just exactly as it began in Jesus of Nazareth.

When we want to see the beginning of this glorious system of God-man life we are pointed to an humble cottage, where a simple country maiden is holding



50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

converse with the Most High. She is fully resolved to be His alone. Herself, her reputation, all shall go if asked for by Him to whom she now gives herself in child-like simplicity. "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." And it is done. God almighty comes down in a moment to that lowly, willing, trusting one, and there is Immanuel—God with us.

We hear the strange announcement, we marvel on at this wondrous sight, and still we ask, "How does this come to pass?"

Ah, we may go on asking that for ages and ages to come; but shall we ever find any one who can give us the explanation? God proclaims His will. Man says, "Yes," and it is done. That is all. To take God at His word in a moment: to believe that He really means to do all He says, and to claim that it is done there and then is just to receive all the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

We are reminded, as we gaze upon this wondrous sight—a human being receiving God in all His glory—of the launch of some huge ironclad.

There stands the huge building, for so it seems, all scaffolded around. Spectators, crowding every space from which the strange sight may be witnessed, stand in breathless silence when the moment comes. A gentle hand strikes one little blow, a quiet voice speaks but one word, and the great building glides into the water, and is a ship amongst the ships. The thunder of cannon and the shouts of the great multitude rend the air. It is a great event brought about in a moment by one simple act of faith. That lady was satisfied that the vessel was there, and was ready. She believed that it was fully intended to let it go the moment she should do her part. She believed that there was enough skill, enough power, enough determination in that yard to secure a safe and successful launch just then. She was satisfied that all the plans and arrangements and labors of many months were intended to have their culminate glory by her own act just then. And, trembling it may be in that great moment, she just spoke the word of request, of command, of faith, and it was done.

Is there nobody reading this page who has firmly believed for many a year that God was able and willing to enter and fill his soul at any moment? A thousand times you have wished it, a thousand times prayed for it, a thousand times

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

seemed almost to come up to it; but you are only drawing nigh, and praying, and wishing still. Why not try believing just this moment? You want nothing beyond His very own word: "I will dwell in *you*, and walk in *you*." Then why not tell Him in simple confidence just now, "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," and take it at once for a glorious certainty that it *is* done? You feel already that God is very near. You draw nigh to Him; but His own purpose and desire all the time is to be perfectly one with you, to fill, to overwhelm you with His mighty presence. Receive Him, and while all heaven opens up before your believing eyes, and all hell mutters curses at your credulity, and while a scoffing world and an unbelieving Church look on watching with jealous eyes and ears, proclaim, "The Lord reigneth."

And He *will* reign, filling your heart for ever with food and gladness of the heavenly sort, driving back every invading thought with His mere glance of light, and making your life henceforth His own in very deed and truth: His own in every thought, and feeling, and word, and act.