

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT BELIEVING

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Does anybody believe in God? A strange question, perhaps some will say, in this day of church extension and of Christian light, when so much scripture knowledge is diffused abroad, and so much money constantly expended in God's name. Ah, yes! but to whom much is given, of them shall much be required. In times of comparative darkness we find that those who professed to believe in God followed at his bidding the most extraordinary directions, and were made gazing-stocks to all men, by acting in a manner that everyone condemned. With all these examples before them, and with the assurance given to us again and again that these people met with God's approval, and were enabled by His grace to triumph over every foe, we find the Christians of the present day disposed to a very great extent in practice, and even in creed, to obey men rather than God. Why is it? Are the men of science so invariably correct as to warrant our modifying a letter of the Bible at their haughty bidding? Is the fashion and opinion of the world to endure for ever, and is the word of God passing away? If not, why do Christians bow to the one, and forget the other?

Why is the house of God made the parade of fashion? Why are worldly topics incessantly occupying tongues that are never, or scarcely ever, used for Christ? Why do Christians so seldom expect to see anyone converted at their services, and scarcely ever expect the salvation of any of the outside godless world? Why do millions of professing Christians question the possibility of a man's knowing his sins forgiven while on earth, and deny the possibility of living one day without sin (while many of them are singing expressly that petition every Sunday)? Why are stories of saving grace, such as that of this Mission, read and heard with great reserve, or with great wonder, while the histories of human achievements are carefully studied as undoubted facts? Why are pastors and people alike generally so much at ease about their own souls, and the souls of others, if God be true?



50 Articles of War

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Let anyone look around upon the religious world especially, craving for the refined, the beautiful, and the gentle, while millions are dying without God, and he will be constrained to repeat our question—Does anybody believe in God?

WHY SHOULD ANYBODY BELIEVE?

Are we not all rational beings, capable of judging for ourselves about everything, and having a right to come to a decision all our own? Are we not all born to live a separate life, and intended to be and to do something quite different from everyone else? Why must our minds be fettered in any one particular instead of being left free to take their own course? So thought Adam and Eve, and so have all their children thought more or less since.

How nice it would be to be gods, with worlds of our own to do just as we liked with! Then we could indeed be monarchs of all round us, and refuse to believe anything. But, alas, for our pride, we can only be “as gods”; and oh, what a bitter experience that has been to every poor rebel from Eve downwards! To put on the airs of a god, and not to be one; to insist upon thinking and acting as you please, and yet to be forced by-and-by to submit to others; to dare punishment, and then to have to cringe under it—ah, that is the sad lot of the unbeliever for ever.

WE MUST BELIEVE, FOR WE ARE SUBJECTS.

Russia may refuse as long as she pleases to believe or recognize the Spanish Government, but the citizens of Madrid must either accept that government or face its power. When He, in whose hands are our life and breath, and all things, speaks, we must hear and believe, or incur His hot displeasure for our insolent rebellion.

WE MUST BELIEVE, FOR WE ARE IN THE DARK.

A stranger coming into a strange place in the daylight may walk about its streets and choose his own course in every way, but he who arrives at night must be content to follow the directions of others who have seen what he cannot see. Now, no matter how our pride may abhor the fact, here we are wandering in the darkness, neither knowing whither we go nor how soon our career may be



50 Articles of War

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cut short. There is only One who knows all about us, and the way that we take—we must either follow His counsel or be lost.

WE MUST BELIEVE, FOR WE ARE WEAK.

At the crossings of the great thoroughfares in the city you may see thousands of strong men rushing across as though there were no danger, and but rarely meeting with accident; but, by-and-by, you will observe some weak one approach, stop, look about, and wait till some stronger framed and stronger nerved may, by a show of protection at least, give safety. The mass of mankind, confident in themselves and ignorant of their weakness, rush into the busy world with its myriad temptations, traps, and pitfalls, and fall victims to the power and subtlety of the devil. There is only one strong Friend always present and always sufficient. We must either trust in Him or be brought to desolation.

WE MUST BELIEVE, FOR WE ARE SICK.

In this enlightened age there are multitudes of people who have “no confidence in the medical profession”; but it is very curious, if not amusing, to observe how rapidly these persons betake themselves to some book of medicine, to some medical preparation, or to the advice of almost anyone the moment they feel the slightest symptom of disease. Human nature, alas, is full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. We must either avail ourselves of the skill of the only Physician able to give us life and health, or we must die; and oh, how many leave all concern about their everlasting life till it is too late! Like the foolish man who waits till mortification has set in before he will complain, and throws his life away rather than be thought incapable of bearing pain, so millions, rather than expose themselves before men as truly in sorrow for their sins, will hush their grief till everlasting agony becomes their doom. But

WHAT IS EVERYBODY BOUND TO BELIEVE?

Must every mind comprehend and accept all the truths contained in the Scriptures? Must every heart intelligently adore the Trinity in unity, and warmly embrace all the teachings of Jesus? Must one set of doctrines be adopted and tenaciously clung to by every one, and one system of teaching be the only method of leading men to heaven? Oh, no; thank God, a very small creed only



50 Articles of War

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is imperative upon us all, and with a great variety of information and of thoughts on many matters, we shall not fail to meet in heaven if we only believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ.

But, then, what is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it just believing that He was born, crucified, and buried; that He rose, went to heaven, and will come again to judge us? No, for all these articles of the creed are held by the devil and his angels. Is believing on Him believing that He will save us when we die, or at some future time? No, for this in itself implies that we do not believe in Him as our Savior just now. Suppose a man to be lying in great pain, the doctor comes into the room and says, "Just apply this ointment, it will take away your pain in a moment." "Oh," says the patient, "I am glad to hear it; I believe what you say, and have no doubt I shall be better some time." "Oh, but," says the doctor, "use this now; I have brought it on purpose." "Oh, thank you; you are very good, and I have no doubt you speak truly; but I would rather not take it just now." Could the doctor look upon that man as a believer in him and his medicine? Certainly not, and until the remedy is made use of, there is no reason to look upon the patient as believing in it.

Just so, no matter what a man may think about Christ, it will all be of no avail unless he applies the precious blood of the Lamb of God to his own soul's wounds, and those wounds are made whole by the application. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive" (not hope for) "remission of sins." "To as many as received Him to them gave He" (not will some day give) "power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe in His name." Whoever has not received that remission of sins, whoever does not know that God has for Christ's sake pardoned his sins, and made him His child, may be sure that he has never believed on Jesus.

But this simple believing on Jesus, this believing He saves me, He cleanses me, He befriends me, He takes me for His own, oh, what a new world it opens to me! The moment I believe on Him I have got a God! The world, men, myself, all are as nothing compared with this sudden gain. "Whom shall I fear, of what shall I be afraid, now that God is for me?" Oh, how earnestly the soul clings to Him when a man really believe in Jesus! But oh, how often does the world creep in and divide the heart that once was full of faith in its one Lord and Savior! Let the backslider in heart beware! Confidence once dimmed is not so easily re-



50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

established, but is very easily overthrown. The only way to be a happy and safe believer in Jesus is to believe in none but Him. A soul thus steadfastly confiding in Christ wonders

WHY DOES NOT EVERYBODY BELIEVE?

Alas, how few there are who really exercise saving faith? Why are there so few?

1. *Because most people have not heard what to believe.*

Millions in distant lands have never heard of Christ at all, and in our own England there are many millions who never listen to the Gospel, who will not listen to it if they can avoid doing so, and who will live and die in heathen darkness, unless Christian people go out to them in the open air with the good news they need so much.

Again, it most, alas, be said that, while multitudes attend the means of grace, but few comparatively are pointed plainly and clearly to the Lamb of God. There is plenty of teaching, but no light; plenty of creed, but no living faith; plenty of forms, but no saving power; plenty of prayers, but little praying, in the vast majority of our places of worship. So that even now the number of those who really have heard in a way they can understand of God's plan of saving men would startle us by its smallness, could we but know it. But, even of these, many do not believe.

2. *Because they believe in themselves.*

They are a very respectable, harmless sort of people, who never did any serious wrong, and are no worse than anyone else. All that is said about religion is very well in its way, no doubt, and they only wish everyone were as favorable to it as they are. They attend a place of worship, and always did—in fact, they were brought up that way. They don't make any particular profession, but are not particular how many of this kind they make—as, indeed, they have no need to be—for they find no fault with anybody else's religion, and nobody finds any fault with theirs. Millions of these poor, self-complacent, comfortable slaves of Satan are sleeping away a wasted life under the very shadow of the cross, and



50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

yet, if special means are taken to arouse them, people cry, "Excitement!" "Enthusiasm!" Many again will not believe in Christ,

3. Because they believe in the world.

They know the truth, but do it not, because they like the world's gay toys; they believe in "being somebody," in "getting on," in "not making yourself different from other people." They love the world and the things of the world, and are determined at least to make the great Jesus wait their convenience before they will accept Him. One of them who left home the other day in perfect health and strength, to all appearance, stepped into a little pleasure boat for an hour's fishing, and died ere the boat could be brought to land again. His pleasuring, alas, was over far sooner than he expected, and now, too late, he mourns for ever that the Sunday night before he did not cast his poor soul on Jesus. How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation? But why is there so much unbelief?

4. Because believers are so inconsistent.

How can the world be expected to believe in Christ when they see the churches even in their corporate capacity aspiring so eagerly after show and position, and money, and all that is the earth earthy? How can business men be expected to attend to religion while professors of faith constantly excuse themselves, with smiles of self-complacency, from attending even one divine service through the week? How can men be persuaded of the saving power of Christ when they see that most of those who profess to be Christ's are saved from nothing as far as they can judge? How can careless worshippers be expected to believe in conversion when they scarcely hear of one case of it in connection with their place of worship from year's end to year's end? How can the outside world believe in a heaven or a hell when they see those who believe in both so little concerned about the eternal destiny of anyone?

Ah, let us make no mistake. The unbelieving world is not the greatest criminal, but the unbelieving church; and, unless a great change come over the conduct of the professed believers of this land, there will be a day of vengeance as surely as there is a God in heaven. To be talking glibly about the blessings of the Gospel, and to be listening to it only on Sundays, and allowing

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

millions who will not come to hear it to die without the sound of it, is rank hypocrisy. It is smiling, kissing treason. Oh, may the spirit of true, living faith come upon believers! Then will many believe and turn unto the Lord.